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THE MAGAZINE OF THE MOVIES

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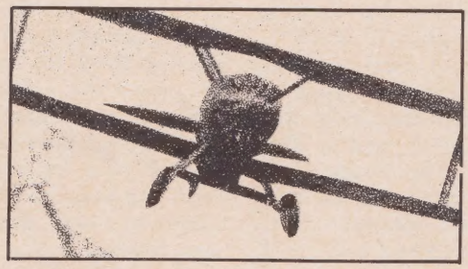

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A handy-dandy guide to some of this season's major films in the form of nuggets gleaned from the writings of some of America's major movie critics, compiled by **Susan Schenker.**

Cover photo courtesy of New Line Cinema. Our thanks to Sara Rischer and Jerry Winslow.

NEWS

SHORTS

MARTIN SCORSESE expects to be directing ROBERT DE-NIRO in a film on the life of boxer Jake LaMotta later this spring. ... JONATHAN DEMME received something of a mauling at the box-office last year when the film he directed, *Citizens Band,* refused to go anywhere commercially despite critical acclaim, two different titles and a variety of ad campaigns. Perhaps as punishment, DEMME is now to be seen as Matt, one of the monster's meals, in *The Incredible Melting Man.* Hollywood is not a forgiving town. ... Polaroid has started marketing, in California, its instant home movie system. The camera costs about $184, the player $515, and each 2-minute-40-second film cassette is $9.95. ... According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average wage-earner had to put in 38 minutes of sweat to pay for an adult movie ticket back in 1967. By 1977, that had been reduced all the way down to 34 minutes. ... Remember, when you see the dining room dance sequence in MILOS FORMAN's *Hair,* that those are real Rosenthal imported dishes being smashed all over the place—at $150 per place setting. ... *The Champ,* starring RYAN O'-NEAL in a remake of the 1931 classic, is to be the U.S. directing debut of FRANCO ZEFFIRELLI. ... First it was to be a theatrical film, then Paramount decided that their revival of *Star Trek* would work better as a syndicated series, but that idea was eventually dropped too. Now, with the success of other sci-fi features in the theatres, creator GENE RODDENBERRY is again re-writing his screenplay for the big screen. All of the *Trek* originals—except LEONARD NIMOY—have been signed... CLIVE PARSONS and DIVINA BELLING—who produced the vastly underrated *Inserts,* with RICHARD DREYFUSS—have secured film rights to the hit TV series "Rock Follies". ... KEN RUSSELL is busily preparing his next feature, for Paramount: *Space Gospel.* ... While, in Italy, preproduction work has been suspended on the FEDERICO FELLINI project *City of Women* —reportedly after Titanus, the major (non-North American) distributor, objected to the rapidly-escalating budget. ... Among those who have reserved space (at $500 apiece) in the cargo bays of a 1980 U.S. returnable space shuttle is none other than STEVEN SPIELBERG, who wants his camera aboard in order to photograph the earth and moon for special effects for his sequel to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.* The $500 fee is just a down payment; the final price will depend on the weight of the experiment (a 60-pound experiment will cost $3000, a 200-pounder will run $10,000). ... INGMAR BERGMAN's *The Serpent's Egg* has a sequence in a 1923 Berlin street. Among the vehicles in view (at least in production photos) were: a 1930 Model A Ford two-door sedan, a truck (of Italian or German manufacture) that dates from 1934, and a 1927 Chrysler. ... The Muppets will soon star in their own $8,000,-000 theatrical feature. ... It's SHELLEY DUVALL and JACK NICHOLSON as the two leads in STANLEY KUBRICK's *The Shining.* ... JEAN-CHARLES TACHELLA—director of *Cousin, Cousine*—is soon to start shooting *Silver Wedding,* about a couple of long-married forty-year-olds who decide to separate and lead their own lives. ... According to a recent *TV Guide,* the most prolific filmmaker in the U.S. is (surprise!!) the U.S. Government—with such boffo titles as *Hospital Housekeeping, Mopping, Two-Bucket Method* and *Climbing and Working on Poles.* ... April 17 is the announced start-date for *Anouchka,* a French-Russian co-production, directed by JACQUES DEMY and starring DOMINIQUE SANDA, MICHEL PICCOLI and ANNIE CORDAY. ... Columbia Pictures will be distributing *Remember My Name,* written and directed by ALAN RUDOLPH, starring GERALDINE CHAPLIN, TONY PERKINS, BERRY BERENSON and MOSES GUNN, and produced by ROBERT ALTMAN. ... CONSTANTINE COSTA-GAVRAS will be directing WILLIAM HOLDEN and MICHAEL MORIARTY in *Le Pêlican*—about inter-generational conflict. ... Try to catch *My Official Wife* (Vitagraph, 1914) when it comes your way. Playing a secondary role (beside CLARA KIMBALL YOUNG) in that long-forgotten 6-reeler, was a man who gave up his budding acting career to find even more excitement as a leader of the Russian Revolution. His name was LEON TROTSKY.

THAT'S MY KID!

Kidsworld is a weekly half-hour TV show broadcast in 74 cities across the U.S. that—until recently—used exclusively adult crews (shooting in 16mm) to report on the activities of young people around the country. Now, though, the show is offering $100 for any Super-8 film made by a child that is accepted for broadcast. If you, or a child you know, have a film —or an idea for a film—contact: Bob Behrens, The Behrens Company, 2451 Brickell Avenue, Miami, Florida 33129.

FARRAH FIRMA

An advertisement that ran in a recent issue of Texas Monthly seems aimed at the most dedicated Farrah Fawcett-Majors fans: For only $4.95, the firm of Land Ventures Inc. will send you an authentic deed to a small piece of the land that was Farrah's early childhood home in Corpus Christi. Money-back guarantee if new owner is not "overwhelmed"

PLAY IT AGAIN...

This is the kind of thing that sponsors and producers of documentary films dream about:

At the beginning of each broadcast day, the BBC likes to run a little movie so that viewers can properly adjust their colour sets. Well, the BBC technicians apparently thought so highly of the colour quality of ***Multiplicity*** *(a Crawley Films production for Canadian Pacific) that they used the same film every single day for a whole year! The BBC-TV day begins at 4 p.m., so the guess is that—by the end of that year—there was not a single man, woman or child alive in Britain who had not seen the film.*

WHITE RUM AND FICTION

Liza Minnelli may well be introducing attractive models (whom she has never met) to a cocktail (that she has never drunk) at an Andy Warhol party (that she has never attended) for the nice folks at Puerto Rican Rum—but she ain't doing it for nothing. Ms. Minnelli permitted the use of her name in the $6,000,000 advertising campaign in exchange for a Warhol painting of her. No word yet on what Warhol or other celebrities whose names will be appearing in future ads—Natalie Cole, Dick Cavett, Diahann Carroll and Burt Reynolds—got in exchange, although a spokesman for the agency involved said that it was cash and in amounts "not as large" as might have been paid for an actual appearance by the said celebrity in the ad.

LETTERS

Holier than thou

I held back for as long as possible, but am finally forced to give in. I must come to Steven Spielberg's defense against John Simon's review of *Close Encounter's of the Third Kind*. Mr. Simon would be well advised to look at his own work before criticizing others for building material out of holes.

The reason for Spielberg's Bombay location was not because the director wanted "a trip to the East" as Simon suggests. The explanation can be found in the program which Simon claims to have read; it is to point out "the worldwide extent of the continuing UFO mystery." This is also why Spielberg used Truffaut, not for "private fan club reasons," but to stress that UFOs are international. Also, Spielberg has said that he was trying to depart from the stereotyped German scientist with a beard and a white coat.

Staying with Truffaut for a minute, Mr. Simon seems to think it incredible that a foreign scientist could step in and call the shots. Ever heard of Werner Von Braun?

Mr. Simon says that a car is destroyed one moment and then drives off the next moment, good as new. I wouldn't exactly say that a car (actually it's a truck, if Mr. Simon is interested) is demolished simply because some maps lying on the dashboard and the contents of the glove compartment and ashtray fly around the cab for a few moments.

As to why the extraterrestials take people to their "domain," scientists (both social and physical) have a strange little habit of examining specimens. One only needs to look at the US space program: the astronauts went 230,000 miles just to pick up some rocks. With this in mind, isn't it safe to assume that after coming from another galaxy, extraterrestrials might not also wish to examine some specimens?

I guess Spielberg had some difficulty in finding real extraterrestrials to appear in his film (they're probably on holiday a long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away). Perhaps Mr. Simon should have been a technical advisor on *Close Encounters* since he seems to be so knowledgeable about what the aliens should look like.

Bill Rogers
New Rochelle, N.Y.

Chaplin

I have a memory of Charles Chaplin which I'd like to share with your readers.

Back in 1951, I was visiting the United Artists publicity department in their New York headquarters. Chaplin was visiting United Artists, and every publicist in the place was there to see and listen to the great man. The conversation was about films in general—at first.

Then Chaplin changed the subject. He told us he had come up with an idea for a sequence he would like to use in a picture some day. He didn't have a story to go with it, and he didn't have any idea how or when he would use the idea—but he wanted to try it on us for a reaction:

The scene is a fashionable street. It's about two o'clock in the morning. A very well-dressed gentleman (to be played by Chaplin, of course) staggers into the scene. He is elegantly dressed—top hat, white tie, tails, and carrying a cane. He is also very drunk. He staggers to the front door of one of the houses, then starts looking through his pockets for the key. He can't find it. He stands a moment, figuring his next move. Suddenly, an idea dawns. Very slowly, he removes his waistcoat, folds it neatly and puts it down on the sidewalk in front of the house. Next he removes his vest, folds it, puts it on top of the coat. Then comes the dress shirt. He folds the shirt neatly, and puts it on top of the vest. He then sits on the curb and removes his trousers, folds them carefully and puts the trousers on top of the pile of clothing. He is now dressed in his underwear, socks, shoes—and top hat. He kneels down over the pile of clothing, reaches into his trouser pocket, and removes a gold cigarette lighter. He flips the lighter on, and applies the flame to the pile of clothes. He stands, leaning on his cane, watching as the clothes burn. When the flames have died down, he sifts through the ashes of his clothes with his cane, until he finds what he's been looking for—the key. He bends down, picks up the key, puts it in the front door lock and staggers into the house.

You can imagine how that scene would have played, given the Chaplin touch and the Chaplin timing. Unfortunately, he never put it on film.

Max Weinberg
Hollywood, CA.

Masters of phoniness?

Pierre Greenfield's exposition of John Ford's inadequacies (*Take One*, Nov. issue) was long overdue. Trouble is, the statement, "more of Ford's alleged masterpieces turn out to be slight, tedious or plain bad than anyone else's," applies as well to Mr. Greenfield's favourites, *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Though I can't recall *Wagonmaster*'s quality from when it was originally released, I've yet to see a Ford western better than mediocre—with the possible (and dubious) exception of *Stagecoach*. His watchable entertainments, in my view, were the Depression pictures, *The Informer*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Long Voyage Home*, and the early '50s pair, *The Quiet Man* and *Mr. Roberts*. The common overrating of Ford is comparable to, though scarcely more excusable than, that of Mr. A. Hitchcock, another pretty shallow master of phoniness whose few creditable works were done about the same time.

Robert MacLeod
Sirdar, B.C.

Werewolf

Enjoyed your Nov. '77 issue as usual. Of special interest was an article by Charles T. Gregory reviewing a film called *The Werewolf of Washington*. Although the film was not distributed in the US, it was shown on Home Box Office in January of 1976. Home Box Office supplies movies and specials to Cable TV systems across the US.

J. Byerly
Dir. Product Evaluation
Home Box Office
New York, N.Y.

Man attacks *Werewolf*

Charles T. Gregory's review of *The Werewolf of Washington* (November) contains two dubious inferences—first, the film was never distributed in the United States, and second, the film is "a well-made horror movie."

I saw *The Werewolf of Washington* in, of all places, Cleveland, where it played November 14 through November 20, 1973. It was reviewed in *The Cleveland Press* on November 16.

I also found the film exceedingly poor. During the werewolf attack at the service station, for example, the beast's trouser cuff is so high one may clearly see where the wolf foot is attached to the ankle. Michael Dunn's underground laboratory comes off as a weak *deus ex machina*, but compared to the loose structure of the entire feature, it perhaps remains the most noteworthy satiric sequence.

Richard Hansen
Columbia, Missouri

Any answers?

I thought I could find an answer to any movie question, but I've got one that has been bugging me lately. In *Carrie*, why is all the traffic in the background moving backwards while the young girl is walking to Carrie's grave? I've been in the theatre business for three years and have seen many flicks, but seeing the cars move backward and the girl walking forward threw me off. In fact, most people I've talked to said they didn't even catch that bit. Any answers?

Mike Rogers
Evans, Georgia

Four-dollar words

So-called film expert David Thomson's article in the November issue entitled "Groucho Marx: A Retrospective" is by far the poorest thing your magazine has seen fit to print since I have begun reading it. Thomson seeks to impress us with his four-dollar words and closet philosophy, all the while attempting to state that this great man, rivalled only by Fields and Chaplin as the greatest film comedian of the 20th century, was driven by an inner neurosis.

LETTERS

While I agree with some of the opinions expressed, notably the statement that Groucho "was aghast at being trapped in brotherhood with Chico and Harpo," I feel that Thomson has tried to see too clearly through the Marx Brothers films, to express Groucho's witticisms as signs of a severely cruel and bitter man, while failing to take the man for what he was, a great entertainer. My advice to Mr. Thomson is to leave professional psychoanalysis to professionals, and stick to writing Biographical Dictionaries.

J. Cuell
Peace River, Alberta

Another Hepburn?

I agree with James Monaco's analysis of the hoopla currently surrounding Diane Keaton [see article in the November *Take One*]. There is an ambivalence in her actions about all the attention being lavished on her, but certainly not a unique ambivalence. Another actress who comes immediately to mind in this regard is Katharine Hepburn. She, like Keaton, has chosen not to understand what all the fuss is about, thereby retaining her sanity while increasing the public's interest. Hepburn's manner of handling the attention has been occasional attacks on photographers and scoldings for autograph seekers; Keaton's is to hide in a corner. But in both the survival instinct is strong, and that's what matters.

I first saw Keaton on the *Merv Griffin Show* in 1970 when she was in "Play It Again Sam" on Broadway. With a master of one-liners, Bob Hope, seated next to her, Keaton was asked by Griffin, "And how is Woody?" Grinning sheepishly, she replied, "He thinks a big cheese is following him." A star was born.

Karen Cooper
Molalla, Oregon

Silly and wretched

As a subscriber to *Take One*, I feel I have a right to object to one of the most embarrassing articles I've ever seen in any film magazine, commercial or academic. I'm referring to Pierre Greenfield's diatribe on John Ford in your Nov. '77 issue.

I'd like to make clear at the outset that, although I feel Mr. Ford directed some utterly fantastic films, this is not an outraged-worshipper-defending-a-god letter. Rather, I object to the article because of its juvenile tone and its absurd base. Objections to a film because of inauthenticity (*Clementine*), nationality (*Valley*) and implicit philosophy are ludicrous. Is Mr. Greenfield saying film should be totally nationalistic, imbued with forward-reaching goals and lofty ideals, and with actors who are cast according to nationality?

The article was silly (à la "Monty Python") and wretched. Ford cranked out some crap, granted, but to applaud a paternalistic film like *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) is crass. (Thank God, he didn't bring up 1960's *Sergeant Rutledge*.) Mr. Greenfield would also do well to remember that film is a cooperative art.

I'm sorry you printed an article like Greenfield's. As my wife said of "Print the Fact..." —"The guy who wrote this has his thumb up his ass." How about the people who published it.

Terrance Fowler
Bowling Green, Ohio

So there!

I just read Bruce Berman's review of Nagisa Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses*. (*Take One*, March '77). While attempting to describe the symbolism in the movie, Mr. Berman states, "Shots of Sada's feet bound and deformed, as was the Japanese custom for thousands of years, conspicuously present themselves from time to time..." It has never been the custom to bind women's feet in Japan. The Chinese had bound feet, not the Japanese. I suspect that Sada's feet were not deformed at all, but that she was wearing "tabi," the special white cotton socks women wear with their kimonos.

Chris Kleemeier,
Vancouver, B.C.

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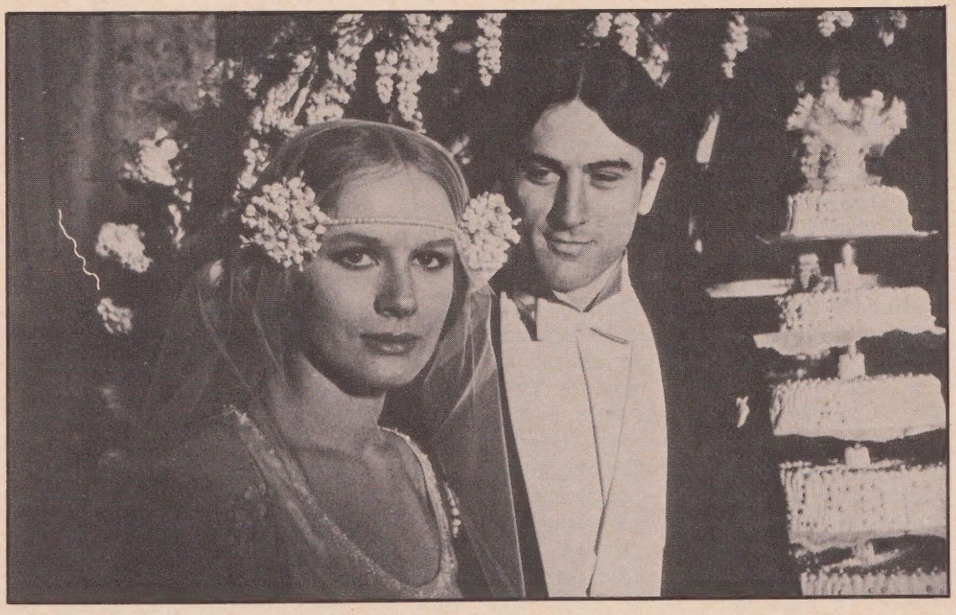
FILM REVIEWS

1900

Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci

A Paramount release. Director: Bernardo Bertolucci. Producer: Alberto Grimaldi. Screenplay: Bernardo and Guiseppi Bertolucci and Franco Arcalli. Photography: Vittorio Storaro. Sound: Claudio Maiello. Music: Enio Morricone. Editor: Franco Arcalli. Cast: Burt Lancaster, Laura Betti, Robert DeNiro, Dominique Sanda, Sterling Hayden, Gérard Depardieu, Stefania Sandrelli, Donald Sutherland, Alida Valli.



Dominique Sanda and Robert De Niro in 1900. *A Busby Berkeley salute to divine decadence.*

"The philosophy of praxis is consciousness full of contradictions, in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an entire social group, not merely grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action."

—Selections from the *Prison Notebooks* of Antonio Gramsci

A funny thing happened to me on the way to writing about *1900,* Bernardo Bertolucci's first bona fide epic. And a funny thing happened to *1900* on its way to you.

Sometime during its perilous Atlantic crossing, a quarter of the film got lost. When I saw *1900* several months ago in Paris, it ran five-and-a-half hours. The *1900* that was screened at last fall's New York Film Festival, the one Paramount currently is distributing in North America, comes in at just over four hours.

That missing hour-and-a-half is bound to cause problems for both of us, since you'll most likely have seen the compact epic and I'll be talking about scenes you'll be sure to think I'm making up as I go along.

1900 is set in the Emilia-Romagna region of North Italy, a region that has been — according to Bertolucci, an Emilian himself — "socialist since socialism has existed and communist ever since communism has existed." Even the name Emilia originally meant 'labor'.

1900 takes as its central structure a dialectic that is visionary both artistically and politically. On January 27, 1901, two boys are born on the same Emilian estate. Olmo, the first born, is the son of a peasant; Alfredo is the son of the *padrone*. We see Olmo and Alfredo as children against the backdrop of the peasant strikes and rebellions of 1908, as young men just after World War One, and through the rise of Fascism and the Second World War. We see them again on April 25, 1945, Liberation Day, when the peasants of Emilia for one day seize the land and Alfredo — the new *padrone* — with it. And we finally see Olmo and Alfredo at the end of the film (set in the early 1970's) — very old men fighting the battle of history they've been waging all their lives.

It's an overwhelming, perplexing film, and not entirely because of its epic scale. Never have Bertolucci's powers as a filmmaker been keener or more apparent — his strengths that nearly always verge (or even rely) on excess, his excesses that now and again turn into wonders. The way we feel as much as see his camera movements, his talent for transforming movie clichés into stylistic bravado, the way light and color work for him as they do for few others — these powers have been more carefully under control, more judiciously reigned-in in past films, in *The Conformist* and the lapidary *The Spider's Stratagem*. But with *1900* it's as if Bertolucci has grown younger, has returned to the exuberance for life and movies that so shaped our responses to *Before the Revolution,* the film he made some fifteen years ago when he was twenty-one.

He's not a mature artist in *1900* — he is in fact a long way from it — and we're quite aware that he's aware of this, exploiting it: he lets himself be young enough to rashly try everything he wants to try, to take risks a more mature artist would reject as unnecessary. There's no need for Bertolucci to decline any gambits yet. For all we hypothesize about the goals of *1900*, it seems the true goal lies far beyond this film, that this is somehow a dress rehearsal for a masterpiece. *1900* exhibits the self-confidence of a director who knows exactly where he's headed: he's just not quite sure of how to get there. He does recognize, though, that monumental mistakes form part of the way.

The central risk of *1900*—the one that fails so gloriously—rests on the attempt to merge two visions, artistic and ideological, to blend lyricism and polemic, dance and dialectic, Hollywood and Mosfilm, Garbo and the masses. Of course all art is ideological, regardless of the artist's intentions. The attempt to merge art and politics is in some ways redundant; it's hard to join that which was never split asunder to begin with. The split that arises in all Bertolucci's films, however, arises from the ideology that is consciously imposed and that which is already unconsciously there. The ideology he wants to express is frequently obscured by the ideology he's trying his damndest to repress.

It's always been hard to say whether politics subverts style or vice versa in Bertolucci's past films — from the very beginning when he was still Pasolini's protégé, the balancing of the two has obsessed him — but with *1900* ideology predominates and style, if not quite subverting, at least momentarily distracts. For Bertolucci is as strongly attracted to Garbos as he is to Marx: witness *1900's* all-star cast — Burt Lancaster, Robert De Niro, Alida Valli, Dominique Sanda, Gérard Depardieu, Stefania Sandrelli. His films, though, remain so intensely visual that Marx begins to look like Louis B. Mayer.

1900 is a markedly un-talky film — dialogue is not one of the things you remember about it. Political points are scored through structure, by symmetry of plot, by rhythmic echoes of Eisenstein and Dovzhenko and, most of all, by images. Bertolucci has neither Godard's nor Fassbinder's way with words; the few lines

his characters do speak are simply washed away by color and movement.

So we are left with an ideological battle fought with banners, murals, posters, caricatures, icons. And camera moves that attempt to be moral, at least when he's shooting the working class. Their scenes are as direct and clear as Bertolucci can manage, bathed in the light of political rectitude. Calculated, meticulously (but not fussily) choreographed, possessed of a sobriety and purposefulness, these scenes reveal a Bertolucci who can't let go. He's not very often relaxed with his workers; he stays quite formal and correct, politely observing, discreetly applauding.

Most of the time Bertolucci runs his peasants through socialist-realism tableaux until the angry masses begin to take on the look, not of a force, but of memory. They work as an abstraction in long shots, and in close-up they become everybody's favorite noble peasant, simple, childlike and pure.

And they are noble — opposing an armed militia, defiantly whistling the Internationale until they're gunned down one by one by the Fascists (in an eerie tribute to Rossellini's *Open City*). But denying them complexity denies them life, tempers their strength both morally and historically.

1900 begins promisingly with the young Olmo, a violent rebellious randy kid, wiry and bold. He prowls the estate of Alfredo's father wearing a perpetual threatening scowl. He taunts the pudge Alfredo, teaches him sex-games and the inherent superiority of the working-class cock. "A socialist with holes in his pockets," he calls himself.

When Olmo matures into Gérard Depardieu, the rangy insolence is gone. Solid physical presence Depardieu undoubtedly has; Bertolucci doesn't deny him a bullish virility. A totem of paternal stolidity, he seems to be waiting his turn to take up a central position on the working-class mural that opened the film (which, incidentally, features three figures leading the undifferentiated masses; two of the figures are men, obviously leaders and comrades; slightly off to one side stands a working-class madonna carrying a baby).

Moving to the opposite end of the class structure, and admirably fitting his style to the class, Bertolucci gives us Ada, a Futurist in furs played by Dominique Sanda. We can sense Bertolucci moving onto home-ground here. He's at his languid ease with Ada and her friends — cocaine and Bugattis, Art Deco to the teeth, a Busby Berkeley Salute to Divine Decadence. We're aware that he doesn't want to get caught up in the glamour he's portraying, that he wants to restrain himself, remain ironical toward it, but it's as though he just can't help himself. Set a reformed decadent bourgeois to catch a decadent bourgeois and you risk ending up with two decadent bourgeois having a hell of a good time.

Ada gets under our skins too: the audacity of Bertolucci and Sanda together proves irresistible. Ada has the energy that's missing in *1900* from the rest of her class. She not only opposes Fascism, she mocks it to its face. But then, just as we're seeing the depths that lie beneath the eccentric surface, she's suddenly a Warner Brothers Alcoholic Lady staggering about her lonely mansion, slumming it on Christmas eve in a working-class *taverna*. Her retreat into sodden passivity, the script explains, occurs because her husband, Alfredo, is too weak to oppose his own overseer, the Fascist Attila.

The one courageous move that is permitted Ada proves disastrous for *1900;* she finally leaves Alfredo — amidst sardonically soaring violins — but she leaves the film too, and that's our loss.

Bertolucci simply doesn't seem to know what to do with the women in *1900*. He toys with them — as he does with Ada — or he sanctifies them (Olmo's lover Anita (Stefani Sandrelli) teaches old men at the local People's School) and then when they begin to claim our attention, he kills them off. Anita, we are abruptly informed at the beginning of the second half of the film, has died in childbirth during the intermission. Similarly, Alida Valli is introduced for a brief demonstration of her formidable talents, and just as suddenly she's impaled on an iron fence by the Fascists.

The one woman who does survive right through to the very end is Regina (Laura Betti), Attila the Fascist's loyal wife. Bertolucci wanted Attila and Regina to be "a provincial version of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth," and to a remarkable extent he succeeds. Many people have accused Bertolucci of reducing Fascism to comic book dimensions by allowing these two to act as a microcosm of all its evils. Yet there is, I think, an intensity and a reality to these characters that goes far beyond a comic book vision of life. Attila and Regina are caricatures, by the second part of the film even nightmarish grotesques, but they are — perhaps more in terms of the after-image they scar one's memory with — more complete and compulsively believeable than any other characters in the film. Their evil is not banal; it is floridly, vividly brutal — there's no dismissing or categorizing it.

The problem with Attila and Regina is not that they're not convincing enough but that they're too convincing. They throw the whole film out of whatever precarious balance it has attempted to maintain. There is no calling us back to the noble peasants and their righteous struggle after we see Attila sodomize a young boy (with Regina attending) and then playfully swing him round and round by the heels until his head smashes against the walls again and again, leaving dark smears of blood. *1900* tips over the void with that scene as we observe Attila and Regina, not simply aware of their monstrous depravity, but also in awe of it.

Evil has perhaps always been essentially more photogenic than good, just as the complex is so frequently more attractive than the simple. We go to movies half-hoping to get the layers of contradictions, the shadings, the irreconcilable polarities and impulses of life. From *1900* we get a sense of this primarily from Attila and Regina; Bertolucci can't quite bring himself to invest his peasants or his bewildered caught-in-the-tide-of-history landowners with much more than class-labels and the visual equivalent of slogans. We would like to identify with the workers, to believe their struggle can succeed, but what chance has it against the forces of the Fascists and their complacent collaborators? What chance have the simple and direct against the devious and complex?

There is a tacit fatalism behind Bertolucci's view of the revolution, a liberal-intellectual doubt that such a thing could ever succeed. Certainly for Bertolucci and his class, life will always be before the revolution, but one's own historical condition need not always be projected as universal.

Alfredo himself comes closest to the kind of character we've come to identify with — or perhaps as — Bertolucci himself throughout his films: a son of the ruling class, profoundly uncomfortable with his elite (and vaguely eccentric) origins: Fabrizio in *Before the Revolution*, the son of the traitor hero in *The Spider's Stratagem*, Marcello with his insane father and addict mother in *The Conformist*. This central character over the years has become progressively more self-effacing and ineffectual until its natural end, even stillpoint, is reached in Robert De Niro's nearly faceless Alfredo. His performance becomes a master-class in how to play a nonentity; all the disturbingly quiet power of one of the canniest actors around chained to a cipher.

De Niro's Alfredo is as well-behaved and respectful — read guilt-ridden — as Bertolucci is with the peasants. De Niro could ignite or at least relax, and so could Bertolucci, but the director won't let himself or his dramatic stand-in go.

Bertolucci lets the leash go slack occasionally, but so rarely that it becomes in fact a bit of a tease. The important love relationship here is obviously the one between Olmo and Alfredo. With the women so quickly boozed up or killed off, it's the only game in town. Sex and politics get garbled right at the start when we see the two boys engaged in pubescent sex games; it's while showing Alfredo the various ways of masturbating undetected that Olmo dubs himself "a socialist with holes in his pockets." When the two are reunited after World War One, they tussle and then kiss in the loft where they once played sex games as boys. As young men they contrive to go to bed with the same girl. Bertolucci makes it clear — by concentrating on the two while they concentrate on watching each other undress — that the interest of each is less for the girl and more for the other. Once they're actually in bed with her, nothing happens

(except when Alfredo timidly grabs Olmo's suddenly flaccid cock). Bertolucci gets his pair out of the scene by giving the girl an epileptic seizure.

The associations Bertolucci provides for homosexuality become so powerful that he makes it impossible for himself to complete an erotic motif he initially introduced. *1900* takes the Reichean schema of *The Conformist* and gives it one more turn of the screw. (Marcello the conformist becomes an embodiment of the Fascist movement; the perfect closet case, he's the man who becomes more normal than normal in order to mask his own unnormality. What, after all, is more virile, more of a man's man than the Fascist male?)

In Reich's view of things, Fascism develops out of sexual malfunction. As Bertolucci has noted in an interview, Fascists become Fascists because they haven't "reached a mature sexuality." This is how we get Attila, sodomizer and killer of young boys, the Fascist *par excellence*.

Of course things never could work out properly for Alfredo and Olmo — the deck is stacked against them in so many ways. They are separated from birth by caste and therefore by history and politics. Olmo is an impossible quest for Alfredo because Alfredo — not to mention Bertolucci — worships at the shrine of Olmo's proletarian virility, and socialism — because of its focus on the working-class — is sexy. But the love Alfredo bears can never work out: a truly virile man would never be attracted to another male (that would spoil the illusion of virility), especially not to a bourgeois weakling.

Finally, homosexuality is unacceptable — even though it is a preoccupation — for Bertolucci and his films because it is either (a) a symptom of bourgeois decadence or (b) a cause of fascism.

In a recent interview with Gerald Peary in the *Real Paper* (Boston), when asked why he always makes films which deal with homosexuality and yet which equate homosexuality and fascism, and why he never affirms a mature gay relationship, Bertolucci replied, "I've been in Freudian analysis for eight years and I think 'adult' homosexuality is an impossible contradiction. It can't exist." In an earlier interview, conducted during the shooting of *1900,* he noted that, as a result of his on-going psychoanalysis, he was attempting to find a synthesis of Marx and Freud.

To give credit where it's due, perhaps he has achieved an uneasy synthesis in *1900*. Homosexuality is condemned as dangerously retrograde, women are pushed off to one side to make revolutionary babies and then die in childbirth (anatomy is, after all, destiny), the landowner cedes his patriarchal rights to the omnipotent "socialist with holes in his pockets." This may all be revolutionary, but it's only half a revolution. The substitution of a new enlightened patriarchy for an old malignant one leaves a lot of battles still to be fought.

Bertolucci, with the appearance of *1900*, is certainly Gramsci's praxis personified, consciousness full of contradictions. The dialectics slouching toward synthesis to be born are legion — style and polemic, ideology and art, sex and politics, Garbo and the masses. In terms of class Bertolucci grasps the contradictions of his life and the life of his time; he sees himself as part of the contradictions and ends up making a film about it, with Hollywood money. In other areas, though, he fixes on the contradictions but fails to see himself in their midst. In any case, his praxis is not merely practice, the action that grows out of theory. *1900* is practice only in terms of all the wrong notes that are hit, but is more than anything a celebration — an impromptu, often clumsy but just as often brashly, heedlessly beautiful dance to the music of contradiction.

Sometime during the first part of *1900,* Alfredo and Ada happen upon a worker's dance where they watch an old man dancing with a life-size wooden doll that is strapped to his hands and feet. The image is grotesque, pathetic, and yet somehow unaccountably moving. Whatever it lacks, however awkward it looks, it's the only dance there is.

Will Aitken

***Will Aitken** is a Montreal poet, critic and teacher. His major article on Bertolucci was recently published in* Jump Cut.

BLUE COLLAR

Directed by Paul Schrader

A Universal release. Director: Paul Schrader. Producer: Don Guest. Screenplay: Paul and Leonard Schrader. Director of Photography: Bobby Byrne. Music: Jack Nitzsche. Editor: Tom Rolf. Cast: Richard Pryor, Harvey Keitel, Yaphet Kotto, Ed Begley Jr., Harry Bellaver, Cliff DeYoung.

Guy's name's Paul Schrader. Thirty-one, thirty-two years old. Midwest fundamentalist background. Seminary education. Gave up the ministry. Left for Hollywood. Film M.A. from UCLA. Book on *Transcendental Style in Film*. Heavy stuff. Kept a gun by his bed. History of violent episodes. Welcome to L.A. Decided to write screenplays. Why not? Couldn't sell his first. Second was *Taxi Driver*. Third, *The Yakuza*. Sold this one, $300,000. Then *Obsession*. Then *Rolling Thunder*. Now he's a director. Name of the film's *Blue Collar*.

And it's not bad. It's about a trio of auto workers in Detroit, two Blacks, one white; it's about assembly lines and what they do to the people who work on them; and ultimately like all Schrader films so far, it's about futility, paralysis, fear, stasis, and a curious kind of passivity. Nobody wins in *Blue Collar;* nobody wins in any of Schrader's films. Life is long, life is earnest, for Paul, and the grave is but its goal. Maybe you need a little Calvinist blood yourself to understand this. Singlehandedly, Schrader plugs along with tough, downbeat seventies film noir and not only gets more than half his scripts shot, but also makes a considerable amount of money into the bargain, despite the fact that only one of his four previous films has had any success at the box office.

It's a curious paradox, Schrader's career in the midst of the upbeat hype that's the hallmark of seventies Hollywood. Of all the hip young screenwriters of his generation, Schrader not only has the darkest vision by far, but also has been able to impress upon his films the most sharply-defined personal stance. At the same time, he's at least as good a businessman as Milius, Huyck and Katz, or Towne or Ward. He seems more in control of his career, and he definitely knows where he's going—down that black and frightening road. Yet while he admittedly wants to leave his mark, to Say Something, he's best known not for what he does but for what he is: the model of the successful young screenwriter, perhaps a millionaire by now.

I've never been a fan of Schrader's work—his films are all pervaded by an atmosphere just this side of catatonic, despite the subtle electric tension of their form. But *Blue Collar* may mark a turning point. He hasn't yet been able to shuck off his nihilist religious paranoia, but there are hopeful signs that he's on the verge of breaking through.

Blue Collar tells a classic contemporary political story. Based on "source material" by Sydney A. Glass, and co-written with Schrader's brother Leonard (who collaborated previously on *The Yakuza,* the best of Schrader's films so far), *Blue Collar* gives us three auto workers in their early thirties—Zeke (Richard Pryor), Jerry (Harvey Keitel), and Smokey (Yaphet Kotto)—who gradually become enmeshed in the unanswerable contradictions of a life in which the company giveth on the one hand just enough to taketh away on the other. Zeke has three children, can't make proverbial ends meet. Jerry's daughter needs braces. Smokey, single, is a two-time loser. The company treats them like shit on the line (the foreman's name is Dogshit), and the union venally plays along with the bosses.

When the opportunity presents itself of

ripping off the union, the three eagerly seize it. They don't want to get rich; they just want to pay some bills. They pull off the job only to find the safe almost empty, except for some petty cash and a convenient ledger of the union's loansharking for Vegas and New York gambling interests. Zeke wants to use the information to reform the union. Smokey wants to sell it. Jerry is just scared.

Gradually but inevitably the friendship disintegrates. Smokey dies. Zeke sells out to the union, gets to be shop steward, from which position he foolishly expects to be able to change things. Jerry sells out to the FBI to save his skin, his wife, and his children.

It's not that this scenario isn't realistic. Certainly it could happen; maybe it has. But *Blue Collar* is a parable, a lesson, first because Schrader wants it to be, foremost because any film that describes an essential political situation like this must be understood in such terms. What is to be done?

The last shot of the film shows us Zeke and Jerry, formerly buddies, about to go at each other tooth and claw, acting out of a very painful rage. Schrader freezes the frame just before they meet. We hear the words of Smokey:

Everything they do, they way they pit the lifers against the new boys, the old against the young, the black against the white, is meant to keep us in our place.

Here endeth the lesson for the day. The ending's a good solution to the eternal problem inherent in plots of this sort: if you show the heroes winning, then the audience goes home secure that business is being taken care of; if you show the heroes losing, the implication is not to bother. Yet in the context of Schrader's previous work, we can see it as a road not taken. He has come to the realization that action may be possible, but he hasn't yet stepped across the line that divides the passive cynic from the active participant in the struggle.

There's a tension here between Schrader the writer and Schrader the filmmaker.

Along the way, Schrader has loosened up a bit, mainly I think because of Richard Pryor's salubrious presence. He adds a kind of life to the film that has been notably lacking in Schrader's previous scripts. He knows as much about the dark side as does the erstwhile minister from Michigan. He also has the courage to laugh at it.

The women are rather beside the point in this story (we've come only so far) but at least Lucy Saroyan and Chip Fields play working-class wives who don't at all fit the mouldy stereotypes we're so used to.

In his raw interviews, Schrader tends to describe his own career in personal psychoanalytic terms. Travis's gun in *Taxi Driver,* for instance, is his talent. When he places the gun to his head, it's not simply a suicide fantasy (why not knives or poison?), rather a symbolic attempt to blow the bad thoughts away. *Blue Collar* offers further evidence along this line. As director, Schrader thinks it necessary to begin the film with freeze frames of the characters on the line which solarize into abstract designs. He's paralyzed and conquered them even before he begins. The film was shot on location in and around Detroit last summer. The sky is a nice blue most of the time, but again, Schrader can't stomach good skies: he adds a bilious overcast with process work.

Yet as the film progresses, the people come alive. His shots tend to be cautiously and conservatively framed and edited, as if he were afraid to let the people in the film have too much leeway, but Pryor, Keitel, Kotto, Saroyan, and Harry Bellaver (as the old union boss) breathe, sweat, and open up the action. Eventually, director Schrader seems to give in a bit. There's a tension here between Schrader the writer and Schrader the filmmaker. And it's just possible that the positively therapeutic for the passive screenwriter.

In a crucial scene, Smokey (Kotto) is imprisoned in a paint room. The jets are turned on; the blue paint squirts out. Smokey panics. He can't turn them off; he can't get out. It's a paralyzing nightmare. Just at the last moment he manages to break through a thick window to the fresh air outside. Schrader shoots it in longshot. Watching the film, I thought he survived. Program notes tell us that the script calls for him to cut his throat on the jagged glass. A vicious Schraderian irony, of course. Just as you're about to break free you die, in the process.

Yet Schrader the director is working at cross-purposes with Schrader the writer by shooting the scene in longshot so we just can't see what happens. It's a hopeful sign.

Footnote: Schrader once said: "You can open any issue of *Take One* and find a rave of anything. There are no standards on that magazine at all." Hope we haven't disappointed you.

James Monaco

James Monaco is the author of *The New Wave* and *How to Read a Film*, and is a *Take One* Associate Editor.

Zeke Brown (Richard Pryor) keeping an eye on foreman "Dogshit" (Borah Silver), in Blue Collar.

Jerry (Harvey Keitel), resists an FBI agent's attempt to pry union secrets from him.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

Directed by John Badham

A Paramount release of a Robert Stigwood Production. Director: John Badham. Producer: Robert Stigwood. Screenplay: Norman Wexler. Based on a story by Nik Cohn. Director of Photography: Ralf D. Bode. Editor: David Rawlins. Original music: Barry, Robin and Maurice Gibb. Cast: John Travolta, Karen Lynn Gorney, Barry Miller, Joseph Cali, Paul Pape, Donna Pescow.

In the fifties, it was "American Bandstand." We knew the names of the regulars and listened to Elvis and Avalon while checking out the slop, the lindy and the ubiquitous slow dance. When we wanted to dance, we went to sock-hops and junior proms.

In the sixties, while the rich folk frugged and twisted at Joey Dee's Peppermint Lounge and Jordan and Sybil Christopher's Arthur discothèque, the rest of us lay back stoned and were content to dance in our heads to the strains of "Sergeant Pepper."

Now, in the seventies, a resurgence of dancing. "Discothèques" have become "Discos." There are chic Manhattan ones (Studio 54), but real disco dancing is done in the provinces, from Brooklyn to Oakland. The music, following a tradition started with "American Bandstand," is canned. In the seventies, it is monotonous, rhythmic, and meaningless. Drugs and booze are part of the scene but not the main focus. What does seem important is the selfish pleasure of the dance. The energy level is high, but it's without purpose. And nobody seems to be having much fun.

At least, in *Saturday Night Fever* nobody seems to be having fun. John Travolta, as Tony, dances assiduously and not without talent. If the rest of the film had lived up to Travolta's dance scenes, it might have been an important film. But the script, written by Norman Wexler (of *Joe* and *Mandingo* trash fame) is mean and nasty, lacking any self-consciousness or humour. And while Travolta does work very hard here, he is really only hot in comparison to the script itself. Off the dance floor, *Saturday Night Fever* sinks to sub-freezing temperatures.

Saturday Night Fever is based on a *New York Magazine* story written in 1976 by Nik Cohn, who explored the ritual dance habits of teenagers in an Italian-American section of Brooklyn. Bay Ridge is the close-knit community where Son of Sam murderer David Berkowitz met his Waterloo. John Badham (*Bingo Long and the Travelling All-Stars*) stages the film on location with a good sense of the neighbourhood and the people. The mood is tough, as are the post-high school kids who attend (with religious regularity) the 2001 Odyssey Disco. Tony, the best dancer, is the undisputed champ among his peers; a group of swaggering, Brando / *On the Waterfront* creeps whose dialogue consists mainly of ugly racial slurs. Wexler's Bay Ridge is a vicious, bigoted neighbourhood, inhabited by punks. To be fair to Wexler, it must be said that the women aren't any better. There's Annette (Donna Pescow), a chubby little Bay Ridger who has the hots for Tony. Her constant and unrelenting attempts to become his dance (and sex) partner are pitiful and degrading. Then there's Stephanie (Karen Lynn Gorney). She's a promising character: a Brooklynite who aspires to a studio apartment in Manhattan (so much for roots). Tony is attracted to her and they become dance partners, practicing for the Big Dance Contest, the climax of the film. On the way to the Big Dance Contest, there is a gratuitous *West Side Story* rumble, a cruel suicide jump off the Verazzano Bridge by one of Tony's loser friends, and some family scenes in Tony's home that defy the worst TV sitcom for ethnic stereotype.

John Travolta auditioning for the part of Statue of Liberty in Saturday Night Fever.

Stephanie is what we would have called a conceited snot; for that matter, so is Tony. Yet Travolta (like Sly Stallone in *Rocky*) works so hard and gives so much of himself, you can't help but want to watch him (even if you don't understand him). The rest of the cast read their lines conscientiously, but are totally forgettable. I was half hoping that the outrageous Monti Rock III might get a few funny lines in as the disco deejay, but no such luck.

I wanted *Saturday Night Fever* to be filled with the raw, impressionistic, gut feeling of *Mean Streets,* where the music enveloped everything and the film was a non-stop dance. Like *Turning Point* and *Valentino,* the most entertaining and revealing sequences in *Fever* are the ones on the dance floor. In the electric 2001 disco, Tony can strut his stuff. If Wexler can't or won't give him words to explain himself, at least Travolta's dancing can say what should be said. A problem (and it's a biggie) with the dance scenes, though, is the fact that Stephanie is a shitty dancer. Perhaps this was intentional—to keep the focus on Tony. When the final dance contest is held, there's no great rush of energy or tension. Stephanie really holds Tony back.

Saturday Night Fever doesn't go far enough in linking Tony's ritualized need to dance with the conditions and quality of his life. He works in a paint store and has posters of Pacino and Farrah in his bedroom. His life is devoted to dancing and the necessary primping and preening that goes into getting ready for Saturday Night. It's another example, perhaps, of the sublime ego-tripping that is involved in the disco culture and a subtle indication that all those Brut ads have taken hold. These scenes of Tony's toilettes are funny and audiences like them, but when the film is over, there really hasn't been much to enjoy.

Saturday Night Fever doesn't glorify discos or exult in the body-worshipping dance fever. It doesn't condescend or pass judgement on Tony. Wexler's distaste for the working class is evident, though, throughout, and it leaves a bad taste. The film is full of bigots, while in the Nik Cohn story, Tony and his friends were all from different ethnic groups. The film is a fight really, between Wexler's misanthropic script and Badham and the cast's efforts to humanize it.

Susan Schenker

***Susan Schenker** is a New York freelance writer and a reader for major motion picture studios.*

MABABANGONG BANGUNGOT

Directed by Kidlat Tahimik

No credits available.

Taxi-cabs, toy cars, horse-drawn wagons —choosing your own vehicle and the direction you want it to take you in is the major theme of *Mababangong Bangungot*, a spectacular first film by Philippino filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik. "During one third of a century," he explains in his programme notes, "I continued to sleep in my cocoon of Americanized dreams. After this anaesthetic state (or unaesthetic state if you will) which lasted 33 typhoon seasons, I suddenly found myself stirring uncomfortably. By making a film the sleeping typhoon learned to blow again."

The film, whose title translates as "The Perfumed Nightmare", is the story of the filmmaker's awakening from his long nightmare, the lotusland of a third world naif's entrancement by the promises of American technological society. And the way the film came to be screened during the Toronto Festival of Festivals is in itself an ironic footnote to Tahimik's cinematic odyssey. The Festival didn't have the necessary equipment to project the film so it ended up being shown at the Innis College Town Hall at the U. of T. The soundtrack, you see, is on magnetic tape and as Tahimik took wry delight in informing the audience, the technology for showing a film in this less sophisticated technical state is already growing obsolete in North America.

The Perfumed Nightmare won the International Film Critics' Prize at the Berlin Film Festival this year, as well as a couple of other prestigious special mentions. It's already been invited to a dozen film festivals around the world. It turned out to be one of the most intelligent and accomplished films (using "accomplished" in the wider sense that Tahimik's vision of *techne* inspires) I saw in an entire week of Festival screenings. But it wasn't really shown as part of the Festival, and only a handful of people got to see it. Meanwhile, hundreds of glittery filmfolk streamed to the gala opening of Sydney Pollack's latest multi-million feature, *Bobby Deerfield*— the film equivalent, if you're talking vehicles, of a runaway Mac truck.

Tahimik received his elementary film education over the two years he spent editing *The Perfumed Nightmare*, yet the film reveals an astonishing sureness of vision as well as an exuberant, inventive use of the medium that could probably come only from someone who had, by necessity, to discover the limits of his technical resources entirely on his own. The story is unabashedly personal—a young Philippino taxi-driver named Kidlat Tahimik longs for escape from his village and contact with the shimmering American wonders he knows from movies, soldiers, magazines, and *The Voice of America*. One day he meets an American tycoon who takes him to Paris, where it is his job to fill the chewing-gum machines that help make up the millionaire's vast chewing-gum empire. He is enthralled by the modern world he has entered, but lonely. He watches the vast supermarket going up on the corner of his street in Paris drive the "merchants of the four seasons" out of business. On a visit to Germany, he sees the last "onion-tower" made according to the old onion-tower craft lifted into place on top of a building. Slowly he comes to understand the bankruptcy of western-style "bigger is better" progress, until finally he is able to reject the colonial fantasy world he has inhabited for so long for conscious accession to the status of Philippino human being.

But summarizing the storyline like this gives you almost no sense of the film's dazzling uniqueness. *How* Tahimik tells his story is the main burden of what he has to tell. The Philippino who at the end of the film turns his back on the western frenzy for control at all costs that is expressed in modern technological marvels, such as space travel, is also the filmmaker who rejects one of its underlying premises—the innate separateness of the self from the surrounding world. Thus, the film is persistently subjective. Tahimik is our narrator as well as our protagonist. His concern is with the contents of his own mind—a highly imaginative consciousness strung bizarrely and creatively between two polarities: the poetic values and impoverished material facts of life in a Philippino village, and the hallucinatory images of space-age, movieland America. Fantasy and reality, the world inside and the one outside, merge together seamlessly in this film in a manner that might be called "surrealistic"; except that affixing any label to this "style" obscures its rich originality, its roots in the filmmaker's own inner necessities. Besides, although the film's essential dynamic is circular rather than linear, this is no dream-flow of associations but a highly conscious, enormously complex structure of verbal and visual symbolic motifs that is anchored in the steady, comic acuity of Tahimik's vision.

There is a bridge connecting Kidlat's village to the outside. A small boy pulls a toy car over it. "I choose my vehicle." Older, he pulls a bigger car. "I am able to cross any bridge." Older still, he strains to budge an outsized taxi-cab. "I am *still*

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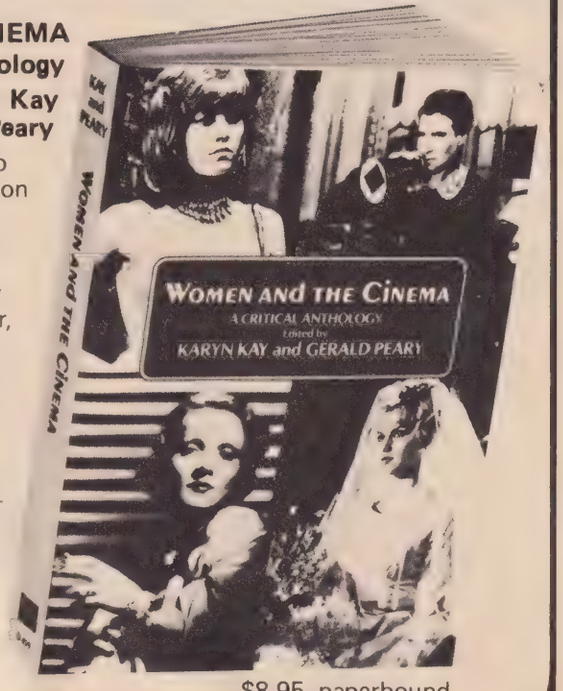

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trying to get over the bridge." Kidlat drives the cab for a living. He is President of the local Werner Von Braun Fan Club: he worships the man who "built the bridge to the moon." As the soundtrack intones "One giant leap for mankind," we see a village child working his way down a tree, a man and a pig sleeping in the shade.

A white caribou, beautiful and elusive, keeps appearing to Kidlat in the distance. The old master craftsman of bamboo, Kaya, tells him the caribou's promise is empty, like the chewing gum given to the village children by the American G.I.'s. Kaya has a butterfly tattooed on his chest. "One day," he promises Kidlat, "You will come to know the quiet strength of bamboo." This proverb recurs: "When the typhoon blows off his cocoon, the butterfly embraces the sun." But Kidlat knows you can't build a rocket ship out of bamboo. On his bedroom dresser his religious icons are attached—the Virgin Mary surrounded by Hollywood pin-up girls.

The American appears. He is dressed in the uniform of a G.I. but with a stetson on his head. He moves like a puppet, he talks like a robot, he offers Kidlat chewing-gum. He will take the Philippino away with him. Kidlat's mother gives him a parting gift—a little wooden horse she has carved out of the butt of his father's rifle. His father died trying to build a bridge to freedom with his rifle. Kidlat prays to the Virgin Mary for a blessing on his own trip to freedom. He apologizes for not flagellating himself but "we're leaving Sunday and the wounds wouldn't heal in time." She answers him in the jaded idiom of a Hollywood starlet, "My job is a bore. Baby, you're O.K. in my book."

Paris has 26 bridges. "If only my friends could see me now," says Kidlat. "If only I *had* a friend." he fills the empty chewing-gum machines of the American. Egalité, liberté, fraternité, supermarché. Why "super"? When the merchants of the four seasons worked fine. Why plastic onion towers? When the traditional onion towers worked fine. Why steel? When bamboo worked fine. Why rockets? When the butterfly embraces the sun anyway. Kidlat's religious faith fails him. "I went to the chewing-gum machine and found it empty."

The supermarket is having a gala opening. All the most important figures in the European and American political and cultural establishments are there—even Queen Elizabeth. But "I am not as small as you think I am." The sleeping typhoon awakes. Kidlat blows the Monty Python-esque cutouts away with one giant puff of his breath. He resigns as President of the Werner Von Braun Fan Club and declares himself independent of those who would build bridges to the stars. "I choose my vehicle. I choose my bridge." He blasts off in an onion-tower for outer space. "The butterfly embraces the sun." He returns where he began. The little carved horse bestrides a tiny car. His mother lowers the shades of her new bamboo house.

As you may have gathered, it's somewhat difficult to convey anything of the amazingly rich texture of this film in written form. Tahimik makes use of whatever technical device is available to him—be it animation or theatrical masks or ironic juxtaposition of images or extended monologues—to say what he has to say. Means in the service of ends, technique deriving out of the heart of purpose. This is what being master of your vehicle is all about. The film cost $10,000.

Of course, Tahimik's approach can also be looked at as what a certain kind of irrecoverable innocence is all about. He himself knows the next bridge won't be so easy. He's not the naïve Philippino artist any longer. And as he pointed out to the tiny audience, you can't make a camera out of bamboo. Meanwhile, his hustling style is still all his own. At the end of the screening he sold silk-screened "Kidlat-cab" T-shirts to help finance his trip back to Europe and more film festivals. May he long continue to occupy the driver's seat.

Katherine Gilday

***Katherine Gilday** is a Toronto freelance writer.*

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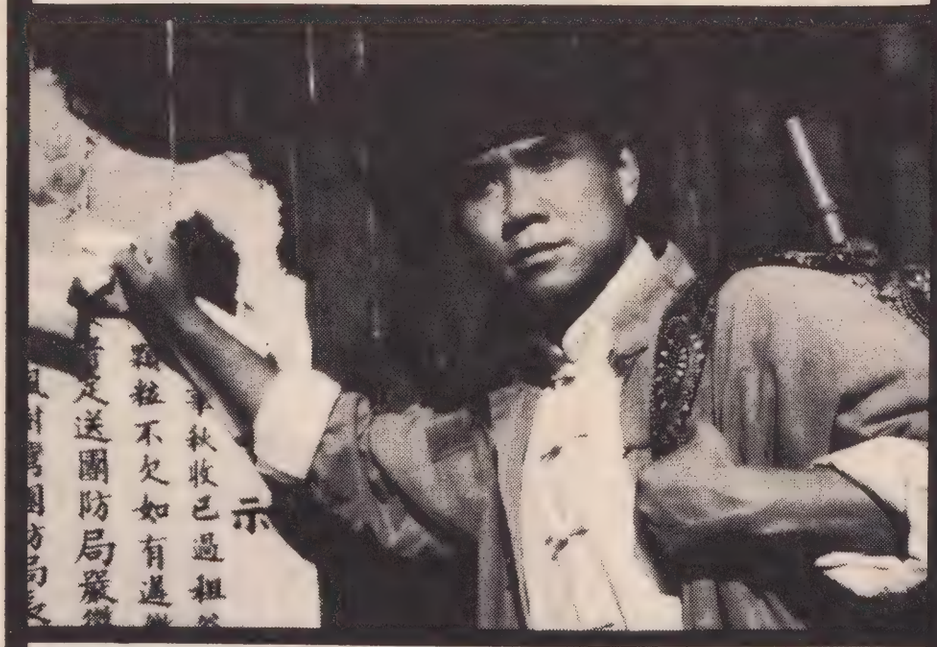

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There is so much wrong with the film version of Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* that one simply cannot call it a well-made movie; and yet its songs are so sensuously and wittily brilliant that one cannot call it *simply* a bad movie, either. Sondheim's score is probably the greatest ever written for a Broadway musical and one has to be grateful for a film record of it being sung within its dramatic context; and yet almost *half* of the score has been thrown out. It was a wretchedly laughable decision, but not altogether surprising. What could one expect with a star (Elizabeth Taylor) who can't sing and a director (Hal Prince) who never directed a movie before? It is painful to think how many of the omitted songs could have been sung during the time it takes Taylor and Prince to get through a simple scene. Even the songs that remain are not left unscathed: the best lyrics from "Later" have been eliminated; Hugh Wheeler's dialogue doesn't always prepare us properly for the musical sequences (particularly "You Must Meet My Wife"); the new lyrics that Sondheim was asked to write aren't as good as the original ones that should have been left in; the editing isn't good enough to sustain "A Weekend in the Country", which on stage was the big production number; and Prince, who directed the stage version, doesn't seem to know that a song sung directly into somebody's face can look ludicrous in closeup.

It is a puzzling film because the levels of quality—between the performers, between the dialogue and the plot, between the overall production and the score—are so varied. In one scene, Desiree (Elizabeth Taylor) must face the prospect of explaining to her present lover, Carl-Magnus, what her former lover, Fredrik, is doing in her apartment late at night. Fredrik assures her that they will slip out of the predicament gracefully since "I am not a lawyer, nor you an actress for nothing." And later, in "It Would Have Been Wonderful," Carl-Magnus laments that he'll never know for sure whether Desiree was unfaithful to him since she hadn't seemed at all "flustered... or even slightly confused." Why then, during the scene in question, is Taylor permitted to act flustered and confused? And why doesn't Wheeler provide her with a quick, witty alibi that would suit her character and fulfill the expectations of the audience? Instead she just seems like a dope, rather than the "perfect" woman of the world described in the song. And yet the song works anyway (despite a bad staging bit with a gun that only distracts us from the lyrics).

All of the songs work, and they make us want the rest of the film to work as well. But be warned: if you are unfamiliar with *A Little Night Music* this film will be tough going; seeing the stilted opening number and hearing Hermione Gingold declare deathishly that "I have no answers, I have no time" could make the quality of the songs seem more like an aberration than a pleasant surprise. But if one is familiar with this score, one walks into the theater ready to forgive just about anything (except the song omissions).

Luckily, most of the performers were retained from the original stage production, and, excepting Elizabeth Taylor, they're skilled enough to sing the songs as they should be sung. The acting is generally excellent—again excepting Taylor, and Mark Lambert as Fredrik's puritanical son (though Lambert has an excuse: his role is one of the worst caricatures ever inflicted on a prize-winning play). Len Cariou, as Fredrik, has an exquisitely light comic touch; he seems incapable of pomposity in a role that could have died of it. And Victoria Mallory, as his child-virgin-wife, brings a remarkable degree of subtlety to a kind of role that usually defies subtlety because it mustn't suggest anything but its own shallowness. And though Hugh Wheeler's script never really does justice to the beautiful, farcical plot (taken from Ingmar Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night*), it does provide a few laughs. Even Elizabeth Taylor is quite affecting on one lyric of "Send in the Clowns." This picture certainly isn't all that one might have hoped for, but to quote from one of the (omitted) songs, "a person should celebrate everything passing by." The sentiment is false, of course, but Sondheim's gift is in making us want to believe that it's true.

Jack Noble

***Jack Noble** is a Los Angeles freelance writer and piano teacher.*

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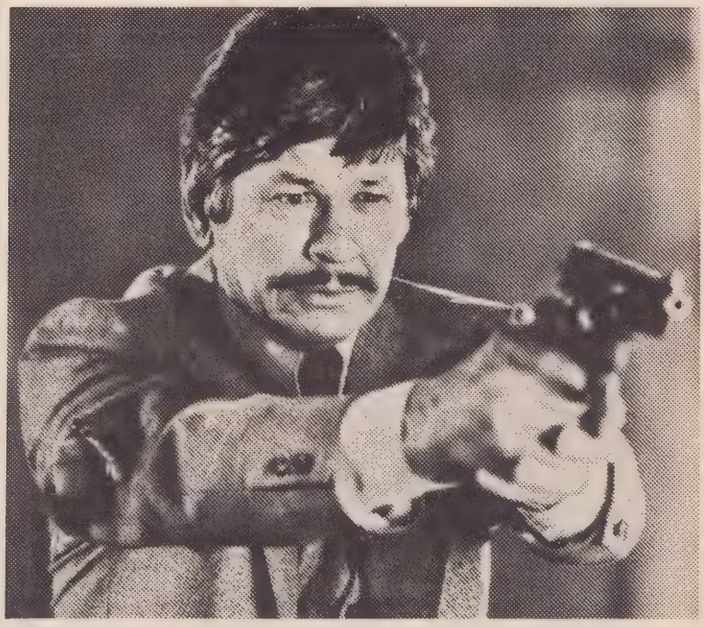

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THE CASTLE ON THE HILL

If the American Film Institute means to be the only game in town, it has to do better than just a good job—it has to do a job that's beyond reproach.

RICHARD FISH

By Michael Goodwin

"The AFI is an atrocity," said the famous *auteur* director. "It's *been* an atrocity from the day of its creation, and it's all because of that asshole!"

He was a *Cahiers* favorite, he had been classified Far Side of Paradise by Andrew Sarris, and we were eating garlic-fed piglet in Chez Panisse (a Berkeley restaurant where fine French food is served, and garlic is shown the respect it deserves).

"You're working on a story about the AFI, right?" asked the *auteur.*

"*Was* working," I said. "I turned it in a week ago. Haven't heard anything yet, so I could always phone in the quote. I *can* quote you?"

"Hell, yes!" said the *auteur*, as the waiter brought dessert: honey-soaked garlic cloves. "It's about time somebody got those bastards in print."

My phone started ringing too early the next morning. "Was I talking about the AFI last night?" asked the familiar voice. "Did I say you could quote me?" Look, I've been thinking, and you know I need every friend I can get at this point, and..."

"All right," I said, "I won't use your name. But with enemies like you, the AFI doesn't need friends."

It had started months before, in the fashionably decorated 15th floor offices of a well-known California magazine. Cinemascope windows let in miles and miles of crystalline, smog-free Los Angeles afternoon. It does happen now and again—once every couple of years. I sat under a striped, French Riviera-style beach umbrella, and listened to the Executive Editor turn down three of my best story ideas. There was still something on his mind.

"How about the AFI?" he said.

"Well," I said, thinking fast, "there's not all that much there, and what there *is* is tricky. Mostly the AFI is terrific—it preserves films, it publishes reference books, it circulates beautiful new prints of old John Ford movies. But for some reason, a number of people hate it anyway. I bet a lot of them won't talk about it, and frankly I doubt that there's anything spectacular in the way of a scandal."

"We've been trying to get an AFI story for months," said the Exec. Ed. "No one wants to take it on."

"I believe it," I said. "Everyone in Hollywood thinks the AFI is God's gift to filmdom—everyone who doesn't despise it. The people who support the AFI will crucify you if you dare to criticize it. The people who put it down will kick your ass forever if you don't do an axe-job. Who wants to jump into that kind of situation? Not me, boss."

If the Devil Theory applies to the AFI, Stevens has the part sewn up.

"What kind of people put it down?"

"Uh, well, all my friends, for openers. I dunno, it's funny, but the studio heads and Hollywood hustlers, who don't need the AFI, are mostly big fans. And the AFI is geared for them too; it responds to success. The academics, the critics, the students and historians, the independent filmmakers —well, they're not shut out, but the AFI is so big that sometimes it's hard to make it notice you. In some ways it's like the government, and in some ways it's like a Hollywood studio. Maybe it's got to be that way to do its job, and maybe it doesn't. But sometimes it seems that the Hollywood establishment loves the AFI and the rest of the film community hates it. Don't quote me."

"We'll pay you a thousand bucks," said the Exec. Ed.

Along a high corridor in the Castle on the Hill (AFI's Beverly Hills *pied-à-terre*) I saw a large frame-blowup of an airplane chasing Cary Grant. There was no caption. Presumably, if you needed a caption you didn't have any business in the building. But if there *had* been a caption it would have read: "That's funny. That plane's dustin' crops where there ain't no crops." If I had been looking for a metaphor, the frame-blowup would have been as good as any—because the closer I got to the American Film Institute, the worse the paranoia got.

"You *did* say you were on assignment, didn't you?" Martin Manulis, the Director of AFI / West, was giving me the iron fist in the velvet glove. Manulis was a stocky man with a red, round face, and one of his eyes kept looking at a point two feet to my left; it was disturbing. He looked like an old-line producer, which is what he was, and he wasn't angry yet, but he wanted me to know he could *get* angry.

The night before, AFI Seminar Coordinator James Powers had had dinner with an editor from the well-known California magazine, and the editor hadn't known anything about an AFI story. So Manulis didn't want to give me a hard time, but he *did* want to know who my editor was. "We don't allow free-lancers working on spec to come in here," he said. "Would you like to use my phone?"

I had only been on the story a week, and they were getting tough with me already.

Founded as an independent, non-profit organization ("quasi-public" or "quasi-private," as you prefer) ten years ago, the American Film Institute describes its business as "preserving and advancing the art of film and television in America." It's an immensely tangled operation, with its headquarters in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, and its West Coast branch in Greystone, the Castle on the Hill, the magnificent old Doheney mansion in Beverly Hills. Between these two locations, the Institute serves "students, scholars, professionals and those of the public whose studies, interests or careers revolve around the moving image."

In plain English, the AFI gathers and distributes money and information. It receives major financial support from the National Endowment for the Arts (more than $2 million in fiscal '77, about 50% of its budget), which means if you're a U.S. citizen you're paying for part of the action. It receives additional revenues from private foundations, memberships, National Film Day (during which participating theaters contribute a part of the day's take), program operations and the Life Achievement Award telecast. Nearly $4.5 million flowed through the AFI in fiscal '77—inarguable testimony to the hard work and high connections of Director George Stevens, Jr.

If the Devil Theory applies to the AFI (a foregone conclusion, according to the Enemies thereof), Stevens has the part sewn up. He's run the Institute from the day it was founded, and even his enemies credit him with the basic fact of its existence. Stevens came to the Institute from the USIA, where he headed the motion picture division for five years.

Stevens *is* the AFI; he sets style as well as policy, and he works hard. After ten years under his command, the Institute is a powerful operation with an impressive list of achievements. It runs 12 major programs, divided between Washington and Beverly Hills—including two (the Film Preservation Program and "The AFI Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States") that enjoy universal support. It runs a solid repertory program at its 244-seat theater in Washington; publishes a shiny, new general interest film magazine called *American Film*; circulates beautiful, new 35mm prints of

classic American films; places young filmmaker/apprentices on feature films; distributes $10,000 production grants to independent filmmakers; runs a Directing Workshop for Women; operates a unique research library; conducts extended interviews with important filmmakers; provides services for film teachers; supports the most unusual film school in the country; and fronts the best Hollywood Movie Show since the Academy Awards.

With programs like this, it's no surprise that the AFI enjoys a broad base of enthusiastic support. And yet there's a body of responsible criticism that refuses to go away: for ten years there have been persistent charges of misplaced priorities, overemphasis on PR, expensive cocktail parties at Greystone, elitism, lack of accessibility, lack of accountability (ideological and financial), high turnover in staff, mismanagement and a fascination with Hollywood that borders on the religious. Nor are these criticisms hurled only by bearded troublemakers; the AFI Enemies List includes famous film critics, successful screenwriters, brilliant filmmakers and prestigious academics.

A prominent archivist is convinced that most of the AFI's filmmaking grants go to "unknown people who have gotten the attention of George Stevens." (Not true; the selection process is pathologically impartial.) A leading film educator *knows* that the AFI's film preservation budget is being cut back year by year. (Apparently untrue, although it's hard to say for sure since the AFI refuses to provide figures.) A brilliant screenwriter is positive that "Everything of value we get from the Institute we could get for 10 cents on the dollar—if Stevens were out." (Arguable.) And everyone *knows* there's an AFI shit-list, even if no one can prove it.

Still, sorting paranoia from the real thing is not always easy. Independent filmmakers, for instance, have long complained about the AFI's love affair with Hollywood. They probably imagine some powerful AFI program head grumbling, "I see a lot of films that are totally worthless. We look for hours and hours at films of people wandering in the streets, or films that are just dots and dashes. I think too many people have been draining the public coffers for too many years for the kind of personal work that has no impact on anyone. They've been indulged too long and given too much."

Martin Manulis, the head of AFI/West (which includes the Independent Filmmaker Program), said that to me. It suggests the difficulty of getting a clear image of the AFI without taking a close look. This article is only half of that close look, since it concentrates, necessarily, on AFI/West. But then (as a West Coast program head puts it), "The L.A. end is much more exciting than the Washington end. They save 'em, but we make 'em."

The Center is supposed to get its graduates into the film business, and it does. It's the most hated film school in the country.

The "L.A. end" is Greystone, the Castle on the Hill. Set in a beautifully manicured 18-acre park (with five-foot-tall rosemary bushes) on a steep hillside in Beverly Hills, Greystone is a symbol of everything some people hate about the AFI. It's big, it's elegant, it's expensive (the "rent" is only $1 a year, but the upkeep is nearly $100,000 annually), and it doesn't make a good film school. It lacks a sound stage, for one thing, and you can't knock down the walls. Still, it suits the AFI's image perfectly, from snazzy deco bathrooms to the Great Hall, presently doing service as the main screening room. "Greystone is show business," says Tom Pollock, a powerful entertainment attorney, an ex-AFI staffer and the man who negotiated the lease in the first place. "But the spirit of the times has changed, and it may be that the best show is to be humble."

To most people who recognize the name at all, Greystone means the AFI film school, the Center for Advanced Film Studies. Designed as a "bridge between university film departments and the motion picture industry," it specializes in classical dramatic filmmaking. In Hollywood, the Dodge City of Capitalism, the Center is unashamedly commercial. It's supposed to get its graduates into the film business, and it does. It's the most hated film school in the country.

Some people hate it for being superfluous in a city that already boasts two superb film schools. Others resent its high cost, especially when the money could be going for less "commercial" programs. It's been accused of elitism, sexism (only 20% of the students are women), and making dull movies. But most of all, it's the Hollywood connection that bothers people. "So far as I can see, it's a way for people to make contacts in the Industry," says Pauline Kael, "and that's not of much value in terms of the art of motion pictures."

For the first year of a two-year program, about 60 "fellows" major in directing, producing, cinematography, screenwriting or art direction. (All students minor in hustling.) There are screenings. There are lectures by distinguished filmmakers. But mostly there are hands-on workshops in writing, producing, editing and directing. It's all done with videotape; no one shoots film until the second year.

Nina Foch is Senior Faculty member; more important, she's the Center's ideological mama. She doesn't teach acting, she teaches Directing the Actor—and does she work! She makes her best points kinetically—whirling, dancing, leaping. ("I'm getting too old for this shit," she says after the leap, but she's not breathing hard.) She tears up her notes, she punches the air, she makes a napkin out of her scarf, she wrings her hands, she falls off her stool *twice* (once backwards, once sideways).

Compared to *that,* Martin Hornstein and Tony Brand's class in Production Management is low key—but if there are secret oral teachings to be passed along at the Center, this is where they will be whispered. Hornstein and Brand are working producers; they provide hard information and cheerful cynicism, and they teach one night a week because they enjoy it.

The Screenwriting Workshop specializes in genre analysis and "pressure assignments"—dramatic problems to be solved within an hour. "We tell our students they'll lose their jobs if they don't come through," says instructor Bill Fadiman. "This is a business. How do you intrigue a producer? How do you sell an idea? Walking into Zanuck's office when his wife has gallstones. You have seven minutes to sell your story and I have tremendous personal problems and forgive me if the phone rings. Go ahead."

And then there is the Central Mystery of Greystone, and the primary tool for turning film students into filmmakers—the Directing Workshop. Every class, every workshop is aimed at preparing the fellows for a series of 20-minute directing exercises, shot on videotape with professional actors provided by SAG. The completed tapes are shown to the entire Greystone community, students and faculty, under the sharp intelligent direction of Tony Vellani, Senior Faculty Chairman (and ideological papa to Nina's mama).

At the end of the first year, approximately 25 of the original 60 students are selected by the faculty for admission to the second year program.

Here for the first time, fellows get to work with film—once they write a screenplay and the faculty approves it. This is no rubber-stamp; some screenplays are *never* approved, and some second year students never make films. Once approved, a $10,000 budget is allocated for each film—money that has to cover production and post-production costs, eats for cast and crew, rights to the material, everything. It's never enough, and those who have it kick in their own money. (Rumor has it that one fellow put in $20,000 of his own—but he's considered a horrible example.) If you've got the extra dough, it's money well-spent; fellows can screen their work for prospective employers, and a well-produced, professional-looking AFI film is an impressive credit. It's hard to get that professional look for $10,000. If you don't have the extra bucks, well, welcome to Hollywood.

"I learned a lot at AFI," says Roberta Ostroff, who made her film after writing 14 full-length drafts. "I learned that any film that gets made and gets seen is a miracle. I learned that it's hard to make movies. You have to fight the faculty, you have to fight negativity and rejection, you have to become an incredible fighter. And *that's* when you make your movie."

The Center is not free; tuition is $2750 per year. But if that's what it takes to buy into the Industry, it's a bargain. Classes, workshops and student films do no harm, but probably the most important part is hanging out with the stars. The official line is "the Center is not an employment agency," but everyone knows better. Scripts are sold at seminars, deals are made at Greystone cocktail parties.

"At the beginning of the year they ask us not to beg for jobs," says Sharon Mann, first-year directing fellow, "so the question is disguised and asked over and over again: How does a beginning director or writer break into the movies?"

It's a good question, God knows, and besides the Center there are three other Greystone programs trying to answer it. The Directing Workshop for Women, now in its third year at Greystone, uses many of the Center's specialized techniques to help women who are already in the Industry make the move into directing.

The Academy Internship Program is a (low) paid apprenticeship for beginning filmmakers who want into the Industry, but don't want (or can't afford) to spend two years at a film school—even a special one. Nearly 80 Interns have been placed on films since 1970; an extremely high percentage of them are now working in the Biz.

"You can't win, and there's no appeal. You're totally at their mercy. It's not democratic. It's not even human."

Some filmmakers don't want film school and don't want apprenticeship either—they just want the bucks to make their own films their own way. The Independent Filmmaker Program is for them. Nearly $2 million has been distributed since 1967 for documentaries, dramatic films, experimental works and animation shot by the likes of Jordan Belson, Will Hindle and Gerard Malanga. Rotating panels of filmmakers and critics distribute the money, and it's one of the Institute's most popular programs.

Add the Life Achievements Award, and *that,* ladies and gentlemen, is AFI / West.

Why is Siew Hwa Beh suing the AFI for $311,000? And why hasn't her case been thrown out of court? Beh (who was one of the original editors of *Women In Film*) claims she was admitted to a "Research Program" at the Center that didn't exist, promised help in procuring films that never materialized, avoided by the faculty, and finally advised to do her research by watching late-night TV reruns. This went on for two semesters. Finally, when she threatened to make a stink, the faculty encouraged her to switch to the directing program. She was duly admitted—and three weeks later she was kicked out, despite glowing evaluations.

"To this day I'm not sure why," she says. "They accused me of not attending classes, but there was no book of attendance. You can't win, and there's no appeal. You're totally at their mercy. It's not democratic. It's not even human."

There's an edge of paranoia to Beh's story, but after three months of research I was beginning to feel that paranoia might be one appropriate response to the AFI. When I started, I had been swamped with loyal legions of enthusiastic AFI students, but then, as word got around, I began to hear from a different, smaller group of people—frustrated AFI fellows, ex-employees, independent filmmakers—whose bitterness was sometimes abrasive, but whose horror stories sounded too similar to be ignored.

Raoul Finney (a fake name) is an ex-fellow who couldn't get approval for his second-year film. Ostensibly, he failed to get theatrical rights to the story he wanted, but he claims the real reason was politics. "AFI films are never shown in theaters anyway," he says. "They wanted to *get* me because I had fought for Frank Danielle—who was fired as Dean. I told Manulis that I was gonna appeal over his head, and he got livid. 'If the Board approves your screenplay,' he said, 'I will resign.' Are you getting this general feeling of bitterness?"

Edgar G. Usher (another *nom-de-guerre*) is an ex-fellow with three degrees in film. "I kept getting in trouble," he says. "I asked to see faculty bios, and they got very uptight. I asked for a syllabus; no syllabus. There were supposed to be tutorials with outstanding professionals, and there weren't. There was no course work, no assignments, no reading, nothing. It was a joke. The Seminars were famous people coming in, and if you tried to ask too many questions, or if you had read other interviews and asked about *them,* you got shit from Vellani."

Usher was not invited back to make a film. He asked Stevens and the Board to look into his case; they declined. "There's no appeal," says Usher angrily. "And if there is an appeal you lose. No one ever wins appeals."

"I've applied for eight filmmaking grants," says leading documentary filmmaker Les Blank (*The Blues Accordin' to Lightnin' Hopkins, Chulas Fronteras*), "and I've been turned down every time. Once they asked me to bring a sample, so I busted my nuts for two days, virtually editing a rough of my film on Mance Lipscomb. They put it on a Steenbeck, ran it fast forward, and said, 'My, isn't it interesting what you find out in the woods of America.' I made it pretty clear that I had no money to finish the film, but I didn't get a grant. And they've shown every film I ever made at their theater in Washington, and never paid me a cent."

Filmmaker Jim McBride (*David Holtzman's Diary, Glenn and Randa*) got a grant, but it didn't do him much good. "I didn't find out until later that it was a TV thing," he says, "with tremendous limitations on content. We knew we were in trouble, because we had all this, uh, salacious material. They were scandalized, they didn't want to give us the finishing money. Finally, they paid for one answer print, which they snatched away and stuck in a vault. It's never been seen since."

The Voice of Reason will now be

heard, courtesy of Ed Emshwiller, prominent experimental filmmaker, sometime-critic of the AFI, and a Board member for six years. "Despite the fact that some people have gotten bum results," he says, "in all fairness, lots of times people have sour grapes about grants when they aren't selected, or someone screws up in typical bureaucratic fashion—which I've seen happen in every damn institution I've ever dealt with. I have reservations about the AFI, but it's given more money to more independent filmmakers than any other organization to date."

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I knew I had put the Institute uptight by asking about money; the AFI prefers to keep figures to itself. I wasn't even after anything in particular. I was (and still am) curious about how much teachers at the Center are paid, and how many reels of crumbling nitrate can be transferred to acetate safety stock for the cost of putting a student through Greystone. As a reporter it's my job to be curious, but those are perfectly reasonable questions for *anyone* to ask the AFI. If the U.S. citizenry is paying for part of the action, then any U.S. citizen ought to be able to find out where our dough is going, right?

The AFI's highest priority is self preservation. Carried to an extreme, it's called paranoia.

Not according to the Institute. The AFI gets a lot of its money because it's "quasi-public." It doesn't have to tell you where it spends that money because it's "quasi-private." In any case, it's a moot point, because Gary Arlen, the AFI's Public Information Officer, insists that the Institute doesn't know what individual programs cost! He can provide neat figures for five large categories—Education and Training, Public Programs, etc.—but not for the magazine or the Film Preservation Program or salaries at Greystone. "The accounting department just can't dig it out quickly and easily," he told me. I had been begging for the figures for three months!

Last year the National Endowment for the Arts appointed a star Review Panel to take a close look at the AFI. Arthur Penn, Gordon Parks, Richard Leacock, John Whitney, Colin Young (Director of the British Film School, and perhaps the first person to call for an American Film Institute) and others checked out a number of AFI programs—including the Center. According to an Endowment spokesman, their report was "extremely favorable." The Center? "They said it was a film school worth funding."

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Power and paranoia often go together, and the AFI is powerful. It can get you money for a film, it can get you into the business, it can get you a shot at the big time. Or it can *not* get you any of these things, at its own sweet discretion. No wonder people are afraid to use their real names.

No one wants the Institute to go away, but many people would like it to be more responsive, more accessible, more representative. These matters become particularly important in light of several attempts by the Institute to cut its ties with the National Endowment; the AFI would prefer to be funded directly by Congress, thereby stabilizing its finances and edging closer to agency status at the same time. So far Congress has declined, but Stevens has very good connections on The Hill, and it may be only a matter of time.

If funds for film-related projects were unlimited, no one would care—but funds are *not* unlimited, and some critics think the AFI is already hogging the trough. With agency status, they argue, the AFI could become the only organization gathering and distributing public and private-sector funds for film. If it means to be the only game in town, the AFI has to do better than a good job—it has to do a job that's beyond reproach. Ten years of criticism make it clear that it's not there yet.

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The subjective angle of this shot simultaneously prepares the viewer for what is to follow, and implicates him in the mastication that is occurring just beyond camera range. The intrusion of such filth and tackiness into a world of elegant place settings and sparkling wine glasses typifies the crazy world of John Waters, a world in which the "normal," prevailing standards of taste and behaviour no longer apply. The barometers of taste in Waters' world are set in the neighborhood beauty parlor, and his vision is filtered through a blur of sequins, glitter, hair spray and toreador pants. Waters has applied the trash aesthetic to B-movie scenarios, at once glorifying and transcending the ugliness he presents on the screen. When a 300-lb. transvestite gobbles up dog shit at the end of *Pink Flamingos* (1972), one is aware that a limit hasn't so much been reached or passed, but totally ignored.

John Waters acknowledges no restrictions in his films. If the people in these movies seem a little strange by society's standards, they transmit a joy and passion in their "otherness" that renders accepted modes of behavior superfluous and irrelevant. It is this feeling of joy that distinguishes Waters' work from the "glitter theatre" movement of the 60s to which it is often linked, those mutants of the Camp sensibility spawned forth by the likes of playwrights Tom Eyen and Ronald Tavel. Whereas Eyen's plays reflect a specious nihilism, Waters' movies discover elements of truth and beauty in his outrageous situations and grotesque characters. In this respect he is closer to Charles Ludlam and his Theatre of the Ridiculous, although Waters' work thus far has revealed a deeper sense of commitment and more discipline than Ludlam seems capable of achieving.

A more pervasive influence on Waters than the 60s trash impulse has been the 40s and 50s B-movie, especially those exploitation flicks that used to saturate drive-ins and the sleazier fleapits of

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JUST FOLKS

John Waters and Richard Benner make "off-beat" movies... but that's the kind of guys they are.

In the next seven pages, George Morris and Jan Dawson talk to these two young filmmakers who once might have had only cult followings, but whose films are now reaching mainstream audiences.

Divine in a scene from Waters' Female Trouble *and Craig Russell as Carol Channing in* Outrageous. *Role playing.*

JOHN WATERS

In the crazy world of John Waters, the "normal" prevailing standards of taste and behavior no longer apply.

By George Morris

The credits for John Waters' new film *Desperate Living* appear over a stationary high-angle shot of an elegantly-appointed dinner table. The place setting is perfect, the napkin is in its ring and the wine is poured into a lovely, long-stemmed glass. The main course arrives, and in the midst of the broccoli, lettuce and tomatoes, lies a dead rat. Knife and fork are delicately applied to this broiled rodent; the unseen diner is obviously relishing the unconventional feast that has been laid before him.

The subjective angle of this shot simultaneously prepares the viewer for what is to follow, and implicates him in the mastication that is occurring just beyond camera range. The intrusion of such filth and tackiness into a world of elegant place settings and sparkling wine glasses typifies the crazy world of John Waters, a world in which the "normal," prevailing standards of taste and behaviour no longer apply. The barometers of taste in Waters' world are set in the neighborhood beauty parlor, and his vision is filtered through a blur of sequins, glitter, hair spray and toreador pants. Waters has applied the trash aesthetic to B-movie scenarios, at once glorifying and transcending the ugliness he presents on the screen. When a 300-lb. transvestite gobbles up dog shit at the end of *Pink Flamingos* (1972), one is aware that a limit hasn't so much been reached or passed, but totally ignored.

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A more pervasive influence on Waters than the 60s trash impulse has been the 40s and 50s B-movie, especially those exploitation flicks that used to saturate drive-ins and the sleazier fleapits of

metropolitan cities. His films take the clichés and conventions of the films of Hugo Haas and Russell Rouse's *Wicked Woman* to their *reductio ad absurdum,* carrying their implications to a point approaching anarchy and nihilism. Unlike Andy Warhol or Paul Morrissey, however, whose films Waters admires, he does not exploit his performers. There is a sense of collaboration between the director and his gallery of grotesques, and it is this mutual interdependence, with its total absence of condescension, which separates Waters' films from the ripoffs of such exalted exploiters as Federico Fellini and Ken Russell.

Waters loves his characters and the actors who portray them. To him a person with good looks is a person with looks impossible to forget. The larger and grosser they are, the more affection he lavishes on them. His costume and makeup collaborator Van Smith understands precisely the look Waters is seeking (Waters laughingly refers to it as an "inner rot"). Moreover, Waters is quick to point out that these people are, after all, only playing roles. The fame the films have brought them has improved most of their lives. For instance, Edith Massey, the egg lady from *Pink Flamingos,* now tours the U.S. with her own nightclub act, and Divine, the transvestite star of most of his films, has gone on to appear off-Broadway and in London in Tom Eyen's *Women Behind Bars.*

John Waters spent an afternoon discussing this and other aspects of his life and work with me recently. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, the site of all of his stories, Waters has always loved movies, particularly the sleazy ones. He loves the work of Herschell Gordon Lewis (*Scum of the Earth, Blood Feast*) and early Russ Meyer (*The Immoral Mr. Teas, Mud Honey, Faster Pussycat Kill Kill*). Obsessed with evil characters in the movies he saw as a child, he admits that he could always identify with them more readily. The influence of Walt Disney's incarnations of evil is evident throughout his films: e.g., the Cinderella tale being intercut with Mary Vivian Pearce's rape in *Mondo Trasho* (1969), the resemblance of hairdresser Butterfly's airlift hairdo in *Female Trouble* (1975) to that of Cinderella's stepmother's in the Disney version, and indeed, the entire fairy-tale ambience of *Desperate Living,* specifically Mink Stole's Wicked Witch drag, straight out of *Snow White,* as she brews her cauldron of rabies potion.

Waters created puppet shows while he was growing up, often incorporating into his performances duplicates of the gimmicks that William Castle would use to juice up such schlock as *House on Haunted Hill* and *The Tingler.* Discouraged by the fact that his puppets terrified rather than delighted his young audiences, and dissatisfied with Baltimore, Waters began running away from home, coming to New York to see the films of Kenneth Anger and the Kuchar brothers then being shown at the old Gate Theatre on Second Avenue.

When his grandmother presented him with an 8mm camera, and a friend filched some film from a local camera shop, Waters' future was decided. He began turning out such items as *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket* (1964), *Roman Candles* (1966), and *Eat Your Makeup* (1967), in which Divine portrays Jacqueline Kennedy in a no-holds-barred re-enactment of President Kennedy's assassination. Like his later films, Waters wrote, photographed and directed these early ones (for *Desperate Living,* Thomas Loizeaux was the director of photography, the first time the director has not assumed this job himself). For a while he attended NYU's film school, but a marijuana bust and his inner conviction that filmmaking is learned through doing rather than sitting in a class and watching clips from Eisenstein, ended his college career.

In the early 70s Waters began peddling his films *Mondo Trasho* and *Multiple Maniacs* (1970) as midnight shows along the West Coast. (Ironically, both these films opened in churches in Baltimore.) Waters did most of his own promotion work, and in the process, contributed to the still evolving concept of the midnight movie, an idea that has insured exposure for such alternative filmgoing experiences as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Eraserhead* (Waters' favorite film of 1977).

Along with George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead,* Waters' own *Pink Flamingos* firmly established the midnight movie as a communal event, a more-often-than-not spaced-out, semi-underground, sub-culture experience predicated on the premise that at this bewitching hour anything can go—and usually does. Most of these films share a predilection for outrageous, preferably offensive, subject matter, excessive vio-

Susan Lowe, Liz Renay, Jean Hill and Mink Stole—the gang from Desperate Living. *To Waters, a person with good looks is a person with looks impossible to forget.*

Edith Massey as the despotic Queen Carlotta in Desperate Living. *Fame has brought a nightclub act.*

lence and purposefully crude technique. They quite literally, intentionally assault the viewer's senses. Superficially similar to the Surrealist shock waves felt earlier in the century, most of these latter-day attempts lack the intellectual vigor or wit of their predecessors. When Susan Sontag posited the theory in her "Notes on 'Camp'" in 1964 that there is good taste in bad taste, she unwittingly voiced an assumption implicit in all of these movies. Synonymous with this assumption is the tacit admission that no traditional taboo is sacred, that nothing is too serious to escape ridicule. And while there are as many variants on this assumption as there are differences in taste, Sontag's basic idea is central to an understanding of Waters' work, especially *Pink Flamingos.*

Pink Flamingos premiered on the campus of the University of Baltimore, where Waters ran it for three days with three showings each day, all of them sold out. Sensing he had something, he took the film to New Line Cinema in New York, the distributors who have handled all his succeeding films. The movie opened on a bitter-cold February midnight in 1973 at the Elgin Theatre in New York City. It was repeated the following weekend to a completely sold-out house. The days of its showing were gradually increased until it was playing every single night of the week at midnight. It played at the Elgin for one year, moved uptown to the New Yorker Theatre, played in various other theatres throughout the city in regular engagements and racked up equally impressive runs in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and San Francisco. It is *still* playing in Los Angeles and at the Nu-Art Theatre, once a week at midnight.

Pink Flamingos has grossed well over $1 million, assuming the aspect of a phenomenon amidst the nether world of midnight movies. Waters maintains that this figure is not as impressive as it sounds. Midnight shows call for overtime rates for projectionists, and they also provide the worst percentage deals. Of course, New Line gets a healthy cut of the profits, not to mention subdistributors' and agents' fees, print costs, the mammoth amounts spent on advertising, and the legal bills and obscenity fines incurred with a film of this nature. Waters concedes that rentals for college showings provide half of the film's revenue, and indeed, it was in my hometown of Austin, Texas, a predominantly college community, where I first saw *Pink Flamingos* in 1974 among an audience of thrill-seeking fraternity jocks and assorted specimens of the Raincoat Brigade.

Desperate Living lingers in the memory as a cautionary fable, told with great passion, wit, and a definite sense of morality.

Waters did reap enough profit from *Pink. Flamingos,* however, to finance *Female Trouble,* and while neither it nor *Desperate Living* has attained the instant cult status accorded the earlier film, both are superior works. *Desperate Living* especially seems to me an astounding accomplishment, a fusion of the trash aesthetic with a depth of feeling and formal control that surface only sporadically in Waters' other movies. There are few if any American releases of 1977 that can equal this film in the balance it reaches between form and content, which is after all a major criterion of a work of art. This feeling and control are manifested throughout *Desperate Living,* from the plaintive melancholy of Chris Lobingier and Allen Yarus's music that accompanies the credits, to the precise force of each image. The hand-held camera style that dominates his other films is judiciously used here for maximum effect, e.g., the entrance into Mortville, and the wrestling match between Mole (Susan Lowe) and Jimmy Dong (H.C. Kliemisch).

Shot for $65,000 in 18 days over a 6-week period (many of his actors have full-time jobs in Baltimore and aren't always readily available), *Desperate Living,* like all of Waters' films, was completely scripted. The director always rehearses for three weeks as if he were doing a play, and once filming begins, he continues to rehearse whenever necessary. Nothing in the films is improvised; their apparent spontaneity has been carefully co-ordinated.

Divine's absence from *Desperate Living* could account for its cohesiveness. This larger-than-life transvestite, with his fishtail gowns and turquoise eye mascara swooping upward to a point behind and beyond his bald dome, is such a formidable presence that he tends to throw the other elements in a film off-balance. This is not to underestimate Divine's immeasurable contribution to Waters' work. In *Female Trouble,* he is the source of the film's considerable energy, giving a "performance" of remarkable range and depth within the role's limited confines.

In *Desperate Living,* however, our attention is deflected from Divine as the central figure, making possible a more clear-eyed appraisal of exactly what Waters is doing. The spirit of Divine remains in the 5'1", 400-lb Jean Hill who plays Grizelda, Peggy Gravel's maid and accomplice in crime. After squashing her employer's husband to death by sitting on him, Grizelda flees with Peggy (played by the indefatigable Mink Stole) to Mortville, a town where killers can live scot-free.

In Mortville Waters has created a community whose hierarchic structure recalls that of fairy-tale kingdoms. (Mortville was erected 40 miles outside Baltimore, the owner of the property allowing its construction only if Waters built it out of sight of the highway and promised to return it to its original state once shooting ended.) Here, wicked Queen Carlotta (Edith Massey) forces her subjects to live in constant mortification for her royal amusement, making them eat roaches (or worse), live in squalor and follow edicts such as walking backwards for a day. This porcine despot never walks anywhere herself, but is borne about by a retinue of leather-studded attendants. When Peggy Gravel insinuates her way into Carlotta's favor in the best tradition of political opportunists, the poverty-level inhabitants of Mortville, led by the grisly Mole and her buxom girl-friend (Liz Renay), rebel and usurp the Queen. The nocturnal revels before the Queen's castle, that celebrate the people's triumph, complete the fairy-tale structure. With the victory torches illuminating the night, and its happily-ever-after ending adding to the feeling of a fairy tale, *Desperate Living* lingers in the memory as a cautionary fable, told with great passion, wit and a definite sense of (admittedly topsy-turvy) morality.

With this film John Waters has emerged into the daylight, claiming attention from a larger audience than the midnight coterie that turned *Pink Flamingos* into a million-dollar bonanza. I for one hope Waters never refines his technique to the point where he loses his outrageous, irrepressible sense of humour. At the moment that possibility seems highly unlikely. He wants Annette Funicello and Troy Donahue for his next film.

George Morris is the author of *John Garfield,* just published by Pyramid. His book on the Hollywood melodrama of the 1950s will be published in the fall of 1978.

RICHARD BENNER

"It's those awful silent majorities that people talk about whom I love and want to get to. They're the ones I like."

By Jan Dawson

How does a nice boy from Kentucky wind up making his first feature film?

Benner: Well, when I was in graduate school in California, Wolf Mankowitz, the English screenwriter and novelist, saw a play of mine and hired me to go to London and write screenplays for his production company. Which I did for a year-and-a-half. But his company was folding, and none of them was ever made. I went from there, having met a lot of Canadians, to Toronto, where CBC Television were very nice to me and gave me a lot of script work, and once even a job as a story editor, which I hated and quit after a year and a half. But I wrote dramas for them. And I got tired of doing that, because other people were directing them, and they weren't always as good as I thought they could be. And I was writing and directing a lot of my own stage work in showcases in New York and I felt pretty confident about my own directing, so I wrote a script called "Outrageous" and went to the government, the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC), and it took them a week and then they promised 60% of the financing necessary. I then went to cast the Craig Russell part, which was the hardest thing in the film, and that took about six months and a lot of plane trips to California.

His agent wouldn't read the script because the price was so low: Craig Russell makes $4000 a week, and I was offering to pay him $550... plus room and board. Finally, his agent read the script—by that time I'd auditioned about 20 people for the part—and the next day he said, "He's yours when you want him." He did a 6-hour audition on video for his acting, and he was very good. So... I had a lead actor but I still didn't have the other 40% of the money.

Then I met Bill Marshall in Club 22, which is a club where he and a lot of people like him hang out most of the day, and I gave him the script. He said he was looking for a movie to produce, and the next day he said he could promise the remaining 40% and that the money would be ready instantly. That was in April, 1976. Then the next day I got hepatitis—that had nothing to do with the meeting—and I was in bed for two months. Then we worked to roll in summer, but it turned out that we didn't really have all the money—either he hadn't yet raised it or it wasn't ready to produce till January. We finally got rolling on January 24... And Marshall was adamant that the film be done quickly enough to be in the market in Cannes by May 11. So we shot in 23 days for $165,000, edited it in 4 weeks, had it blown up and got it to Cannes on May 9.

Since you already had the script and 60% of the budget, didn't you ever consider becoming your own producer? Or did you retain artistic control anyway?

Benner: Bill Marshall had the final artistic control on every facet of the picture from casting to fine cut. And he did exercise those powers.

Is that an arrangement you'd subscribe to a second time?

Benner: You have to subscribe to it in Canada. You have to understand that the Canadian government, which gives money for these film things, is tied into what looks to be like Canadian private producers. You have to understand that they're all one old boys' club. The government—well, not the government, the CFDC—constantly told me that unless the producer has these powers, we won't back the movie. I don't think they'd say that to me again, but that's what they say to every beginning filmmaker. And I kept saying, "but he's a beginning producer, it's his first feature as well, what's the difference?". But, as it turned out, we had a lot of arguments that were healthy. There are some cuts in the film that he insisted on and that I wouldn't have made, but in general the film is, given the footage we were allowed to take, very close to what I wanted.

How much have you earned from it?

Benner: The Canadian minimum for a script without which you can't turn on the cameras—and they're a strong union, they've stopped more than one shoot in the past—is about $8,600, which I was paid in stages during the shooting. There's no minimum for directing: I was paid $1,000. But I hired an extra editor to work on the nightclub sequences, and he and his assistant cost $420; and then there was an extra week of editing and mixing that they wanted to do for the New York opening. And I was in New York and had to come up... Anyway, I've put about $560 out of pocket back into the film. It was some months ago and they've had the bill for a

long time. I'm sure they'll pay me, but right now...

Do you get a percentage of the box-office?

Benner: No. I get a percentage of the producers' gross, and a pretty good one. But I did come with 60% of the money, and the lead, and I own the short story and I own the script.

Do you conceive the script as ignoring social stereotypes or as actually challenging them?

Benner: I'd say it was trying to ignore them. I was trying to put two people—one who's schizophrenic, and one who's homosexual and a female impersonator—on the screen as truthfully as I know them, and to ignore the fact—what they ignore in their own presentation of themselves—that it's different or a problem.

I think that's why the film is getting to the over-60 crowd in New York, the fact that nobody makes an issue of schizophrenic homosexuality or female impersonation. It's just a premise of their lives, and the film is concerned with how, given that premise, they live decently and achieve better lives.

One of the remarkable things about the film is that, unlike most screen homosexuals, whose identity is their sexuality, and for whom life therefore seems to be one long orgy, you allow Robin to be sad and lonely and lost, not all glamour and glitter.

Benner: He's not a torn jeans and leather jacket character, no. He's a guy who finds life in Toronto very boring, and believe me, that's me. In those speeches he makes about the next forty years having not a bit of dazzle in them, I'm talking about myself and a lot of other people who feel that way about the most perfect middle-class city the earth has ever seen. It's like the whole city only hums one note, and it's a very low-key, pleasant note. It doesn't matter if you're Italian, Hungarian, Jamaican, you hum one note, and it's "Toronto the good," it's "affectionately yours, Toronto," it's "I love you, Toronto."

But I also love Toronto, I'm very schizophrenic in my approach to it, because Toronto has been very good to me. I love the way the Mayor runs the city. He's the shortest mayor on the continent, and he's losing height every day, but he is a charming man and he is honest. I love the general population, and the fact that they'll put up with all the tax money that's taken away from them for the arts without complaining. They know they're paying for it and they do support it. What I hate is the Canadian Establishment, which I never got a good whiff of before making this film.

"That's the system that Canada is under—the old boy, pat 'em on the back, see you at the bar system."

Outrageous has been an immense success in New York, critically and financially, so naturally there have been articles about it in the Canadian press, including two major articles in *Macleans* magazine. The first article didn't mention my name or a writer / director, but it did mention the two lead performers, whose film it is. If it's anybody's film, it's theirs, because audiences go to see actors telling a story... The second article mentioned my name in passing, and I don't think it mentioned the actors names at all. But all those articles were about Bill Marshall and Henk van der Kolk and Dusty Cohl (the film's producers). Then *The Globe & Mail* ran an article about Marshall, Cohl and *Outrageous*. It's like the press is there to support people in their own income group.

Bob Miller was in Cannes for two weeks to cover the Festival for *Macleans*, and he came back with a story about Bill Marshall, Bill Marshall's girlfriend, Dusty Cohl, Mayor Crombie and Henk van der Kolk. He didn't write about Alan Moyle, although *Rubber Gun* had ten heavily attended screenings and was sold to the US and Europe. Didn't write about *Rabid* and the sales it was doing, didn't write about *Cathy's Curse* and the phenomenal sales it was having for a tiny film. He wrote about his friends. And it's not his friend's fault. That's the system that Canada is under. It's the old boy, pat 'em on the back, see you at the bar system. And there's no room for the artists there. But it's got to change. If it doesn't, there just won't be any artists.

Now that you seem set on a course to success, do you think there's going to be any conflict or contradiction? Can you combine writing about marginal, subculture characters with sudden riches?

Benner: I foresee no problem. If I were 25 maybe, but I'm not. Although when I was 23, I went from being a university student to living on Wolf Mankowitz's money and eating at a very famous club in London where all the stars went. And it didn't hit me then at all, I didn't find the people interesting. I went back to where the female impersonators were, in Camden Town. So, I think my personality is very set in what it likes and doesn't like and in the sort of people it prefers to be with... which has been a continuing source of irritation to my producers. They constantly want me to have lunch with them at the very nice places they eat—they treat me nicely in that way—and I don't like to be in those places, because the only thing you have to have in order to get into them is money. And in Canada, which is a pioneer country, there's a lot of people with money who simply fell into it. To have money there doesn't mean as much as it might in an older country.

We live in the West Village, we have a small apartment in the West Village and we have no plans to move. The new film will be called "Down in the Village, N.Y.C." It's about the people I love in the village, gay or straight. I was once given an assignment to write about some very nice, wealthy people, and it was probably the worst thing I ever wrote. I'm just not capable. I was fascinated by Fassbinder's *Chinese Roulette* last night; he was able to handle those people—sending them up without putting them down. It was wonderful, but I don't think I'll be doing that personally.

Were you consciously building up the structure of Outrageous *around the fact that in a sense both the principal characters are schizophrenic, or at any rate into playing multiple roles?*

Benner: I'm so glad you picked up on that, you're the first person who has. The whole thing about Robin is that he finds a socially acceptable way to display his schizophrenia, as any actor does. And Lisa understands him. In part because she doesn't say, "Oh Robin, you could do Tallulah very well." She says, "Tallulah lives inside Robin, but he doesn't let her come out very often." She's clued in right away. She knows. He's found a way of displaying all these different facets of his personality which allows him, or could allow him, to be a healthy, adjusted human being, and Lisa hasn't found a way of doing that. And I am very conscious that he is a visually representative schizophrenic in a nice healthy tradition, the same way Laurence Olivier must be. And he's really lucky to have someone to make pretty dresses for him!

Given all you were saying earlier about the oppressive conformism of Toronto, it's very ingenious of you to make a film which suggests that only by

omission. There's the occasional token of the straight society—like the psychiatrist or the mother who's locked outside the door—but the film primarily invokes a nostalgia for a subculture that most Torontonians don't take access to even if they have it. Whatever the script's commercial and artistic merits, I'm still surprised at the CFDC backing what is basically a knocking-Canada picture.

Benner: It's certainly knocking Toronto.

Didn't they see that?

Benner: No. Bill Marshall asked if there could be a scene which showed City Hall, and also one on a streetcar. Originally, that scene was for a laundromat, but we have it on a streetcar because the streetcar is indigenous to Toronto... I think the Canadian Establishment, the CFDC, don't see that these two people, in order to have a sane life, have to get out of town. Though again, Toronto gets better and better every day in its subcultures. The nicest compliment I've had about the film has been from all the kids who came (for free, because there was no money in the budget to pay extras of that number)for the club scenes. One of the things they said was that if the film could be made here, then there must be a life that can be had here... It's done tremendous things for their egos. The gay subculture in Toronto is immensely strong but immensely cautious. And that may change.

Is there a subculture that can accommodate other people than gay men and schizophrenic women?

"Unless they're drag queens... most of the artists in Toronto are part and parcel of the Establishment."

Benner: I guess not, not like there is in London, Paris or New York. Unless they're drag queens, or people who write about drag queens, most of the artists in Toronto, like it or not, are part and parcel of the Establishment. Because their theatres are totally subsidised, either by Ontario, Toronto or Ottawa. They put out the kind of plays which were done on the fringe of London in the mid-60s, which in the long run are rather harmless, because nobody goes to see them, no matter what they say politically. But they're part and parcel of the Establishment, so they're in no way a cultural threat to changing it. They can't wait to get into the CBC. There's another group beyond that, people like Rex Bromfield and David Cronenberg who are not part of that crowd that give seminars at York and talk about *The Sorrow and the Pity* all night. They're just people who make movies that run for 6 to 8 weeks and a lot of people go to. They're not written about, they don't catch the press's eye in Canada. *Love at First Sight* is the first comedy to be made in Canada that is actually running in Canada. But Rex can't get a second movie.

I don't mean this to sound like an insult, but one thing I perversely liked about the film was its really tacky visual quality: not amateur night tacky, but also not the high-gloss varnish on the screen which most Canadian films seem to have. The only two moments where your film seemed to be approaching that was in the commercial breaks for Christmas and City Hall. Was the tackiness difficult to achieve?

Benner: It was very difficult, I had to fight it all the way. The producers wanted a film that looked as glossy as Don Owen's films, but Don Owen's films don't make money, so what does it matter? But they came around. I kept explaining that with that kind of budget I can't get twelve cover shots and take the prettiest one. I can't do dolly. I can't do track. And we're shooting in 16mm, anyway it's going to be grainy. But we *can* polish the performances of the two leads, I *can* polish the story as much as is humanly possible. So that's where the energy for polish and gloss went. I told the crew the first day: if there's a choice between ten minutes for a frosting-on-the-cake camera angle and ten minutes to talk to my actress, it's going to be the actress every time. And some of the shots are very plain because of that.

For me, that reinforces the theme of the script: people first and dogma second. I think I'd have liked the film less if you'd had a larger budget.

Benner: I agree, as far as the actual look of the film goes. It's comfortable for people to watch. There's nothing threatening about the film, nothing bigger than the person watching it. After five minutes of *The Deep*, you know it's bigger than you are, you know it's by and about people who are so rich and powerful and yet you'd be scared if you

Allan Moyle, Craig Russell and Hollis McLaren demonstrate the Toronto streetcar.

Craig Russell as Judy Garland. "A visually representative schizophrenic in a nice healthy tradition."

"My mother is a Roman Catholic who lives in Kentucky, but she wasn't offended by *Outrageous*."

met them. *Outrageous* is a film my mother can be comfortable with. She liked it a lot, and she's easily offended. She's a Roman Catholic who lives in Kentucky, but she wasn't offended by this.

Linking this with what you were saying earlier, I think one of the tragedies of the Canadian style of producer is that they're looking towards the American film for an affirmation of their cultural identity, rather than at what's currently happening in relatively low-budget films today. Their model seems to be Thalberg, rather than Corman in the Sixties.

Benner: That's true, they talk a lot about setting up studios in Toronto and turning it into the Hollywood of the North. And the government supports that. I think it's very dangerous, because what the East Coast of Canada has to offer, along with New York, is intelligent, strong movies that are commercial and get to a mass public, made under two million dollars and addressing themselves to human problems that are not conglomerate ideas. You see, the studios don't exist any more. What exists is a conglomerate which tells the studio what to do. And the Canadian government is very happy to make deals with the conglomerates if it means bringing money into the country. And it's very dangerous. What's needed is more films by David Cronenberg, Rex Bromfield and a lot of people like them. We're desperate for producers in that country, not old-boy left-over Hollywood hacks who want to go cash in on Canada. They're getting a lot of those "let me tell you what I did for Dorothy Parker" guys up there, and that's not what they need. We need energy, we need people as young and as fresh as the directors and writers are, and who'll go out and get the money and stand behind the films all the way. But if that doesn't happen, what Toronto is going to be is where Hollywood money goes when it's on vacation. When they want to make a cheapie, what they call a cheapie, a million dollar movie with one name in it like *The Little Girl Who Lived down the Lane*, which is a Hollywood movie shot in Canada with Jodie Foster and Alexis Smith—for that kind of movie, an American B feature, they'll go to Toronto because it's cheaper. David Susskind makes all his films in Toronto, he makes 10 movies a year. The technicians are thrilled. The government's thrilled, it brings money in. His contribution artistically is questionable.

Your film is full of movie references. Who, particularly, do you feel indebted to?

Benner: The serious answer to that is the Canadian tax-payer. The guy in the street who doesn't complain that some of his hard-earned money is being taken out of his pay cheque and going towards someone like me to make a movie. I think that's terrific, and exactly what the Canadian Establishment doesn't understand yet: that the money is the guy who drives the transit. And we're not giving them a movie they can relate to yet. Well, some of them are, and I hope they relate to this one. Because they're the people I owe my big chance to. Without them, without government help, this movie wouldn't have been made in Canada. Without government funding, there wouldn't be producers in Canada, nobody would bother. I owe 60% of my movie to those people, and they're the ones I'm interested in—I'd love to make movies for that audience.

In other words, you want to make subculture movies for a mainstream audience?

Benner: Absolutely. Everybody is their own subculture, and I think film speaks to people either through exaggeration or specifics. If you see a film about alcoholism, sure, only 18% of the country has ever been an alcoholic; but if it's done correctly, about the human struggle to overcome alcoholism, there's hardly anyone who's awake who can't identify with it. Because we've all had our own terrible, personal, human struggles.

It's those awful silent majorities that people talk about whom I love and want to get to. The others will read Jean Genêt, they don't have to be looked at. They know Dorothy Parker was alive. They know Sartre backwards and forwards. They don't need feeding. But the kids I went to high school with do. They're the ones I like.

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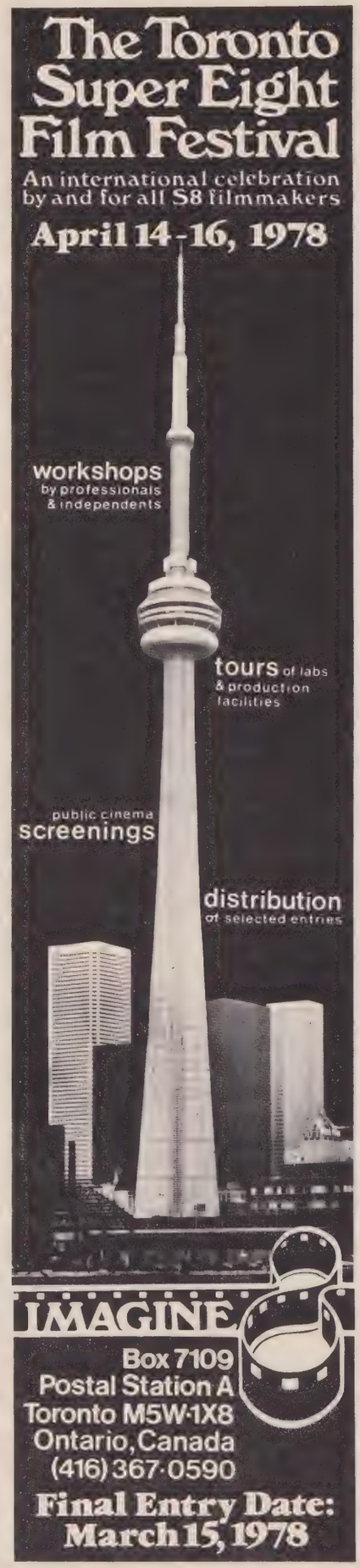
***Jan Dawson** is a freelance critic, broadcaster, translator and programme consultant.*



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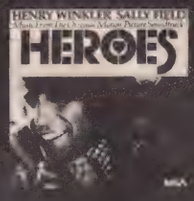

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ME TARZAN, YOU JUNK

The Paranoia Film—inhabited by the One Right Man, the Treacherous Woman, and Them —can make people violent, teach them violence.

By Bruce Kawin

One of the most effective ways a movie has to teach us its view of the world, its system of values, is to control the "thematic energy" of catharsis. Many of the most widely-distributed American films of the last twenty-five years have been pushing the message that violence can be justified in terms of some "higher" system of values, and have been making the point in terms that are not so much violence-orientated as they are sexist. In the most juvenile of these films—*McCabe and Mrs. Miller,* for instance, or *Straw Dogs*—the apparent enemy is a cluster of violent men, but the important enemy is a selfish woman. To get a handle on this slippery, stupid and dangerous message, I'd like to reopen the question of how catharsis works and what it does.

Drama in general appears to work by creating tension in the audience, by increasing that tension, and then releasing it. This tension is usually attached, by the artist, to some kind of issue or emotion, theme or dominant mood, so that at the moment of climax one has an intense experience of thematic energy. In a "triumph of love" movie like *Intolerence,* for instance, the audience is supposed to be washed through with a pure sense of joy-at-the-triumph-of-love when the Dear One saves the Boy from the hangman. Dramatic climax is like sexual climax: at the moment we surrender to the energy and let it flood us, the energy is dispersed. In that moment of release, the accumulated tension and its attendant emotions—and ethics—are profoundly and personally felt. The question is, does this purgative process, which purges only what it introduces to our systems, free us from the aroused emotions or deeply teach them to us? Were the Greeks more stable for having watched *Medea,* the Victorians more sensitive to the pains of the poor for having read Dickens—and what is it, exactly, that makes Americans associate violence and heart-wrenching with directorial competence—in *Little Big Man*'s snowy Indian massacre sequence, for example?

A violent climax floods us with violence. A love climax floods us with love. After deeply experiencing the release of violence (attacking the Other) we are not left full of love (accepting the Other). We are left relaxed. What we have accepted is our violence.

Peckinpah has argued that his violent films, because they are cathartic, release his audiences from their inside violence.. I think it more likely that *Straw Dogs,* anyway, can *make* people violent, deeply teach them violence. The compromise position—that catharsis helps us live with an emotion we have been led through—makes sense too. The rest of the point, however, is that cathartic violence is often the vehicle of an ethic, and that it is really the ethic that is learned, that is applied, that affects both the self-image and the politics of the audience.

I am not saying that we should not be exposed to violence, or that we should be out of touch with anger. I am saying that catharsis reinforces as it disperses; it teaches acceptance of the energy it releases, gives us a guided tour of that emotion. Anger, of course, is not the same thing as murder. Yelling at the students who demand all her energy and giving nothing back, Jean, the heroine of *The Trial of Billy Jack,* teaches us how to accept and release an extraordinary anger. Beating the rat-catcher to death like a rat, David, the hero of *Straw Dogs,* teaches us how to enjoy murder. In fact, he does more: he teaches the one thing we must believe if we *are* to murder—that the enemy is not as human as ourselves, but merely some kind of inconvenient animal. And *The Trial of Billy Jack* (despite the unfortunate fact

that Laughlin's film is so incompetently directed and flabbily cut that it makes Peckinpah's look like the Elgin Marbles) insists that an enemy can behave like an animal—that is, brutally—without *being* an animal, and teaches that even enemies, when loved—when accepted as human beings—can slowly learn to love back. Allen Ginsberg once said, "You only get hostile when somebody says that you don't exist."

What I'm interested in talking about here is the kind of film, epitomized by *High Noon,* in which judgment is passed on the value of the hero's decision to become violent. This judgment is keyed to the world view of the film, to the issues it associates with violence.

Like *Straw Dogs, High Noon* teaches both that nonviolence is irresponsible and that a woman should back up her husband. *A Clockwork Orange* teaches that one is not human without freedom, that freedom necessarily includes the option to do evil, and that male freedom matters more than female freedom. The violence these movies present and justify is most consistently related to their sexual politics and to their fear of the Other.

This is not to suggest that these movies are made only for men, but that they reflect the central attitude of our selfish and patriarchal culture: that the Others are less than human, be they Viet Cong or female or rival Mafia faction. Female audiences participate in this fantasy much as male audiences do, by identifying with the values of the central character (of whatever sex) and celebrating his success against his enemies.

Gary Cooper and Dorothy McGuire in Friendly Persuasion. *Waiting for the moment when she will crack and behave like one of us.*

Sexism emphatically precludes humanism, and can be taken as a useful indicator of a movie's "violence rationale."

One of the characteristics of the modern humanist, and often feminist, picture is that it attempts to present both Self and Other as comprehensible human beings, even when the Other is an "enemy." (In *A Woman Under the Influence,* for instance, the violent double-binding husband is Other but not Object.) Violence does not preclude humanism, but the sense of the-enemy-as-subhuman does; in that way, among others, sexism emphatically precludes humanism, and can be taken as a useful indicator of a particular movie's "violence rationale."

"War is evil, and it is often the lesser evil," said George Orwell in reference to the fight against Franco. Hollywood is a great believer in the Just War, but it lacks the respect for peace that makes such an attitude supportable. Witness some of the causes for which it is willing to endorse violence:

—male supremacy (do not forsake me, o my darling),
—self-defense (my death would be more important than yours),
—territory- and property-defense ("I will not allow violence against this house."),
—consolidation of power (we can't let things get out of hand),
—existential freedom (ultraviolence),
—revenge (I'll hurt you the way you hurt me),
—sexual release (aw, Bonnie...).

The list goes on, but by this point two central anxieties appear to predominate: the fear of others' freedom (the need to control) and the fear of others' control (the need to be free). It's all one pendulum, and the message at either extreme of the swing is: fight for your self, against your other self. Friends, it's a mess.

Before it was made into a movie, *Friendly Persuasion* was about Quakers. This movie teaches there is always something more important than the integrity of one's beliefs—the lives of loved ones, or patriotic duty. I am questioning not the importance of these other values, but the tokenistic way in which nonviolence is "endorsed." In the occupation scene, for instance, no serious attempt is made to show what might happen, or how the Quaker wife might feel if the soldiers had their way; no nonviolent *strategy* is allowed to suggest itself to her. Worse, her bashing the soldier with her broom when he grabs for the goose is comical violence; she looks like a ridiculous woman. (Her husband's violence has more serious consequences; he's a man.)

The audience of *Friendly Persuasion,* because it has been given no reason to take nonviolence seriously, is encouraged to consider the wife unrealistic (however sympathetic), and is waiting for the moment when she will crack—and behave like "one of us," a person.

After *High Noon,* of course, *Friendly Persuasion* couldn't do much damage. The value structure of *High Noon* is remarkably sexist. The sheriff loves his Quaker bride, and has agreed to give up his guns, but first he has to shoot Frank Miller dead. If he doesn't, the craven town will be overrun by the bad guys. Like the paranoid America of 1952, he perceives himself as the only power brave enough to defend the Right, even if no one appreciates or helps him; if he doesn't stand fast, his world and all that he values will go under. (The Commies —or McCarthy, depending on your point of view—are coming on the high noon train.) His violence is justified by appeal to a value higher than nonviolence and higher than marriage: Duty. Duty in this case is a variant of Work, but includes honor, toughness, self-sacrifice, protectiveness and political judgment. These aren't bad values, but in opting for them the sheriff opts not against pacifism, but against *cowardice.* (He changes the subject.) He chooses male value over female value: it would be sissy to leave town at this time, especially for life with a woman. Another way to put this is to say that he chooses work-duty over love-duty.

As is well known, the sheriff gets all the bad guys but one; it remains for the wife to throw over her convictions and shoot the bad guy who's about to shoot her husband. This is the big surprise, and the climax of the picture (triumph-of-love-and-justice). Why does she do it? Simple: her duty to her husband is more important than what she originally considered her duty to herself. To a woman, then, marriage is more important than philosophy. In this context it has to be observed that the Grace Kelly character has probably given Quakers as bad a name as Nixon has. One version of *High Noon* that I play over in my head has her save his life, then annul the marriage; that seems both better drama and better politics. In the film as we have it, she totally surrenders. But of course, that is the point.

In other words, the film endorses marriage as the highest female value and work as the highest male value. The word "duty" applies with equal rigor in both value structures: she has a duty to him, he has a duty to Right. For each character, the question is rephrased in terms of violence; they both dramatize their decisions by shooting a bad guy. He shows that Right is more important to him than she—or himself—is; she shows that he is more important to her than Right—or herself—is. (She made that promise when she wed.) We're a long way from *Straw Dogs,* but it's down the same track; the train that stops here at noon stops there at midnight.

With or without its sexist aspects, the justification of violence goes on in film after film, always with reference to some higher system of values, and appealing to a variety of emotions. One of the most common appeals made is to fear. Since people do not usually go to the movies in a state of fear, the film must first convince them there is something to be afraid of. A large number of our most popular and critically-acclaimed films appeal to a lurking understanding that we are beseiged, doomed, misunderstood, nice people—who are right to be afraid.

Take Alex, for instance, in *A Clockwork Orange.* He is the center of sympathy; we in the audience are his "only friends." The violence he inflicts on others is stylized; the pains he feels are real. He attacks in slow motion, in fancy lighting, with music on the soundtrack and arty weapons in his hands—it's fun and games, intellectual storm-troopery. For a while I didn't know how to take the movie. I knew I walked out of the theatre feeling nauseated (Alex-sympathy). Thinking about the scene where Alex is forced to watch violent films and is made sick, I constructed a "moral" rationale for the picture, in which Kubrick shows us a violent film (*Clockwork Orange* itself) and makes us—or me, anyway—sick. To take it further: the worst thing anyone does to Alex is to change the way he feels when he hears Beethoven; Kubrick decisively changed my associations with "Singin' in the Rain," a happy, loving song if ever there was one. Instead of seeing Gene Kelly dancing down the street, I began to see Alex kicking and raping his way down his kind of street. When Gene Kelly, rather than Alex, sang the song under the final credits, I felt sure that Kubrick was hoping to alert his audience to the power of conditioning (by reinventing "Singin' in the Rain") and, hammering in the irony that is his basic tone, trying to make us sick of violence. When I saw the film again, two rows behind a happy gang of thugs who had shoved their way past an usher and were having the time of their lives, I gave up on at least the last half of the idea. The film's practical effect, at least, is pro-Alex all the way. I had hoped that the fierce, even heavy-handed moralist who had ground out *Paths of Glory* and much of *Spartacus,* and the war-mocker who had given us the brilliant *Dr. Strangelove,* had finally homed in and attacked the violence in his own back yard—i.e., the movies. Instead I became convinced that the cliché is correct: Kubrick's main concern is, and has been, the way people make "machines" more powerful and resourceful than themselves—specially the unique tendency of bureaucratic control to co-opt or pervert sexual expression (strange love, copulating bombers, P.O.E., HAL, etc.). The point about Alex seems to be that he is in danger of being made to respond like a machine (clockwork) and therefore of ceasing to be human. (The people he kills, of course, cease to be anything.) His restoration to a state in which he can "appreciate" Beethoven and women is supposed to be a happy one.

When I saw *Clockwork Orange* again, a happy gang of thugs two rows back were having the time of their lives.

A Clockwork Orange, then, if my reading is right, sets out to make its audience afraid—not of violence and anarchy, but of conditioning and government control, and endorses both sexism and violence, as freedoms, in preference to such control. Its humanism is flatly contradictory. The woman whom Alex murders with the phallic sculpture, for example, has our admiration for being free, standing up for herself, and living the way she wants to; on the other hand, Kubrick not only does nothing to make us care about her death, but in fact does all he can to make her look ridiculous. He keeps our sympathies entirely with Alex, who is having trouble making his escape. Granted, the film is limited to Alex's point of view; even so, the ironic mechanisms do nothing to suggest that his point of view is deficient. Alex's violence, and our sympathy with him in it, free all concerned from the fear the film has aroused. The viewer is reassured, along with Alex, that he is the most important person in the world, and

A scene from Clockwork Orange. *The film's practical effect is pro-Alex all the way.*

that no one will take away his cocky peenie.

It seems to me that these fear of freedom / fear of control films amount to a minor genre: the paranoia film. It isn't just that they're about people who are fearful, and who perceive their attackers as having infinite power and guile—it's that the films make those people appear correct in their judgments. Everybody *is* out to get the hero; he can't win, he can't relax, and he'll probably lose in the end. The most straightforward example of the genre from last year's crop of films was *Looking for Mr. Goodbar;* Director Brooks drastically re-arranges and interprets the elements of the original novel, converting it into a hopelessness thriller, a film not about sexual compulsiveness and pre-feminist isolationism but about the randomness of urban violence. (The most significant change he makes is to move the murder scene to the end of the story and introduce a number of knife-motifs, so that what used to be part of a comprehensible character design becomes just a series of scare-tactics; for a perceptive and moving response to the "ethics" of this film, see Gene Youngblood's column in the January issue of *Take One.*)

This is, I think, as consistent a phenomenon in the last ten years as *film noir* was in the forties; it may even be an outgrowth of *film noir,* with contributions from the anti-communist horror films of the fifties (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* etc.), from the adult western with its deliberate de-romanticizing of the myth of outdoor freedom and danger (*Lonely are the Brave* and *The Misfits* in particular), and from new attitudes toward political change and sexual freedom. The notion of freedom seems to frighten these filmmakers; they seem comfortable only with failure, with depression, and with negativity, and express this by bringing their plots around to unhappy endings that *pretend* to inevitability. The prototype was *Bonnie and Clyde*; by the time *Easy Rider* and *Medium Cool* came around (even though the latter is grounded more in real politics than in the kind of fantasy space under discussion here, that toys with hope before settling into hopelessness and carnage) it was clear that the movies were going to be a different kind of experience for several years—that moments of peace would be set-ups for unmotivated disasters, and that the experience of community-in-the-theatre that Tolstoy thought would be the best thing about the movies would be replaced by isolationist conditioning. Fear, aloneness, an end to hope—not because things in the world or even in the stories were hopeless, but because it was an easy way to get a strong response from the audience. But as these fantasies became more common, the response became harder to evoke; the audience gave up on its hopes, to protect itself against the films' set-'em-up-and-knock-'em-down flat betrayals. A film like *Chinatown* looks backward to *film noir* and forward to the paranoia film; *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is a definitive example of the latter.

A film like *Chinatown* looks backward to film noir and forward to the paranoia film; *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is a definitive example of the latter.

McCabe is like the frog he talks about, who bumps his ass so much because he doesn't have wings; at least, that's what we're encouraged to think. The important question is, why doesn't he have wings?—and the answer is that he does, but they aren't allowed to make any difference, since the movie aspires to a sense of fatality. Take the case of the kid with the socks (played by Keith Carradine). Remember how easy it was to dislike, even to abominate, the fat-boy gunfighter who tricked him into "drawing" his gun, then shot him down? The point is that the Carradine figure was created *only* so that we could feel upset when he was murdered; he has no other function in the world of the film. Altman built on our anger and shock, and channeled our sadness into the satisfactions of McCabe's attack; before we could get mad at the script, we got mad at the bad guys. We were made to feel that violent revenge was good, and that sneaky murder by unattractive people was bad. We were not encouraged to consider that we were being manipulated into a vengeful state of mind, and then being taught that revenge is a good release. This is paradigmatic of the way violence and negativity reinforce each other in the paranoia film; they pretend to add up to the Code of the West while insisting on an ethical vacuum. It is only a false hope—a falsely *entertained* hope—that righteous violence and good sex will restore the moral order in politics, religion and the bedroom; what Altman wants to demonstrate is that nothing does any good in this mess of a world.

Altman's most distinctively fashionable gesture here is to isolate McCabe and kill him off, and to lay the blame for this on everyone in the picture (a sure sign that the disaster is gratuitous). McCabe has killed all the bad guys, but is not allowed to win. Just when he has saved his empire, he loses everything; how ironic. And how manipulative this hopelessness is—how phony to appear to denounce Mrs. Miller for being in an opium fog (when she ought to be out saving McCabe, like the good little woman in *High Noon*), when she has been put in that fog precisely to increase the audience's sense that one's best efforts *are* always doomed, and that one's friends (especially women) cannot be depended on. Mrs. Miller, in other words, is being attacked for believing that it does no good to struggle, one will

Diane Keaton hits the discos in Goodbar. *Fear, aloneness, and an end to hope in the paranoia film.*

certainly lose—when the logic of this paranoia film is precisely that crazy disaster lurks everywhere and that nice guys lose. This is not just a directorial contradiction, and certainly not a deliberate irony; it is manipulative, destructive, and double-binding. From this perspective, the fascism of *Straw Dogs* feels clean.

The hero of *Straw Dogs* has come to the "innocent" wilderness, like McCabe, and is similarly assaulted by the nasty primitives. He is an intellectual, on the run from urban violence and even from—or bearing—international violence. (In its first sentence, the novel on which the film was based makes explicit the connection between the U.S. in Vietnam and David in Cornwall.) Like McCabe he is frightened and retreats to a private dream, then fights back. Like McCabe he wipes out many bad guys. Unlike McCabe he survives, he enters a new and powerful manhood, in which he is sexy and powerful and doesn't need his glasses. He is liberated into this satisfying life by mass murder—but not even the implicit connection with Vietnam can render this point ironic. "The sage is ruthless and treats the people as straw dogs," says Peckinpah, taking his cue from Lao Tze, who meant something entirely different. As Pauline Kael has observed, David is a "real man" now that he has secured his cave and won his woman. In the happy ending, David defends the helpless (Henry Niles) and shoots Frank Miller dead. Not only that, his wife, who has learned her place (Me Tarzan, You Junk), blasts the last bad guy to hell when her husband is in danger, and thereby intensely relieves the audience.

Dustin Hoffman and Susan George in Straw Dogs. *The celebration of cunt submission and the resolution of phallic crisis.*

(Although it looks for a while as if *High Noon* has been turned around, with David the runner and Amy the toughie, it becomes clear on reflection that Amy is a coward and David only dormant in his fascist violence.) The Law of the Jungle is the Law that Lasts.

A Clockwork Orange and *Straw Dogs* are comedies. Each ends with the promise of a happy ending, and celebrates both cunt submission and the successful resolution of a phallic crisis. Perhaps the clearest way to point out the perversity of all this, the sheer needlessness of it, is to observe that *Modern Times* makes the same points about freedom, law, and machines as *A Clockwork Orange,* and that *Tol'able David* turns on much the same issues and situations as *Straw Dogs,* even to the David and Goliath number. Each of the earlier films ends hopefully, shows respect for life, praises courage and celebrates love. Each of the later films celebrates murder and rape, and reinforces our sense of embattlement, isolation and self-righteousness. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein's "Composition as Explanation," nothing changes except the way you see things.

The upshot of all these manipulations is a confusion bearing a message. Going into a paranoia film, we know we'll be shocked and hurt, that we'll feel betrayed by the unhappy ending, that we'll be made to want to do something to fix the world, and that we'll be made to feel that there's nothing we can do. We take two things away from the theatre: the conviction that we are not safe, and the immobilizing fear of freedom / fear of control. Paranoia films disseminate a fear of life, a fear that is most evident in the filmmakers' *lack of ideas;* they don't know how to fix their worlds, and their knee-jerk reaction is to kill off the characters rather than to let them grow and risk. It is possible that this fear of life connects with a hatred of women; certainly Capra or Hawks would never make films like this, and clearly there is no room for a Jean Arthur in *Straw Dogs* or *The Sailor who Fell from Grace with the Sea* or *Chinatown.* But there is a Jean Arthur of sorts in the Billy Jack films (the third of which is significantly an update of Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*). Billy Jack starts off as Tarzan, and grows out of it; at no point is Jean considered to be junk.

All one need do is compare the ending of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* with the ending of *Billy Jack,* to appreciate how a bloodbath not only does not settle anything but in fact demoralizes the audience while giving the impression of dramatic resolution. Butch and Sundance simply die as a substitute for copulation, while Billy and Jean go from trial to trial, making love, not war. The Billy Jack films get their audiences furious at the bad guys, then eventually channel their anger into nonviolent *work,* just as Jean educates Billy beyond satisfactions of violent revenge. Anger and hope are primary here; vengeance and a sense of outraged isolation are not. This is all the more remarkable because the Billy Jack films have a subject that is worth getting paranoid about: the racism, sexism, fascism, and violence that reinforce each other throughout our culture. (As preoccupations go, this makes more sense than confusing life with death.) The purge toward which these films build has a clean feeling. All the aroused emotions find coherent resolution, without a lingering sense of contamination. One of the major reasons they succeed is that they take Jean seriously, allow her to be strong; another is that they are genuinely involved in the world and are aware of the role movies play in shaping the goals and self-image of the audience.

"The sage" neither treats the people as straw dogs nor does he encourage them to think of themselves in that fashion. The subject of the *Billy Jack* films is the spiritual education of a violent man; their mission is the spiritual education of an audience assaulted on all sides by violence and by object lessons on the necessity of violent response. It's about time they were joined in this effort, as well as in their (however tentatively) non-sexist investigations of autonomy and dependence. It's taken a long time, but we've finally seen past the muddle of *High Noon.* Regardless of what violence is threatened, Billy Jack is not forsaken by his darling—but neither does his darling forsake herself.

Near the end of *Steelyard Blues,* when Donald Sutherland, Peter Boyle, and friends are stealing part of an airplane from a military stronghold, one of the guards unties himself and runs toward the alarm. Boyle has given Sutherland a gun; the question is whether he will use it before the guard reaches the alarm box. The audience asks itself what it wants to happen. Sutherland doesn't shoot. The guard reaches the box, but the alarm doesn't sound. Boyle holds up the alarm-box fuse—and the clip of bullets. "Just wanted to see what you were made of," he smiles.

***Bruce Kawin** is the author of* Tell it Again and Again (*Cornell '72*), *a study of repition in literature and film.*

MAKING DYLAN'S MOVIE

Joe Medjuck interviews *Howard Alk*

Question: What three filmmakers have had the most *Take One* articles devoted to their work? Answer: Jean-Luc Godard, Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Alk.

You probably remember who Godard and Hitchcock are, but perhaps aren't familiar with the work of Alk. Nevertheless, it seems entirely appropriate that a magazine which began publishing in 1966 should have placed this emphasis on Alk's films, since as Alk says in the interview below, during the past decade his films have been "some kind of chronicle of the times."

Alk began working in films in the late 50s. Of his early work, he seems most proud of *The Cry of Jazz,* a documentary he edited in 1958. During the 60s he edited *Festival,* a feature film about the Newport Folk Festival; was second cameraman on Don Pennebaker's Bob Dylan documentary *Don't Look Back;* edited *You Are What You Eat,* a youth / music movie; and was cameraman as well as co-editor with Bob Dylan on the singer's film *Eat That Document.*

In 1968, Alk collaborated with Michael Gray on *American Revolution II*, a film about the Chicago Democratic Convention, which included interviews with the Chicago Black Panthers. (*Take One,* Vol. 2, No. 7). Their contact with the Panthers led Gray and Alk to make *The Murder of Fred Hampton,* with money given them by Albert Grossman, Dylan's ex-manager (*Take One,* Vol. 3, No. 9).

Alk then went to Ottawa to work with Budge Crawley on *Janis,* a documentary on Janis Joplin which Alk edited, and for which he received co-director credit (*Take One,* Vol. 4, No. 6).

Offered the job of cameraman and co-editor on Bob Dylan's *Renaldo and Clara*, Alk returned to the States. He and Dylan co-edited the video-taped TV special "Hard Rain" as well, using the joint pseudonym "Gangbusters."

Alk began shooting *Renaldo and Clara* just before Halloween, 1975. Just after New Year's 1978, he spoke to me by telephone from New York, where he was supervising press screenings of the film.

Is this the movie that you foresaw, or did the film evolve while you were making it?

Alk: I can't possibly answer that. It was a long process. It's clear that this is the film that wanted to be made, the film that Bob had in his mind.

Did anyone give any thought to the film's length—that being four hours long might hurt it commercially?

Alk: Dylan's never, as far as I know, made any concessions to market considerations. We knew from the beginning that the film was going to be too long. We shot total footage of about 240,000 feet. But over a third of that was multiple camera shooting of concerts. So our final ratio of what was shot to what's in the final film is the standard documentary ratio of 20 to 1.

How many cameramen did you have on the film?

Alk: There were always two cameramen with the tour, but for the four concerts we shot we used four camermen.

How long did you spend cutting the film?

Alk: Actual cutting took about six months. We began work on the film more than two years ago, but we were interrupted by the second leg of the tour and by the television show, so were actually in the editing room for six months.

Did you first meet Dylan when you were working on Don't Look Back?

Alk: No, I'd met him in New York in the early sixties.

Most of the films you've worked on could be categorized as political or musical. Is there a connection between the two for you?

Alk: Obviously. The films that I've worked on beginning with *The Cry of Jazz* and up to the present day are, for me, some kind of chronicle of the time during which I was operating in film. Not all of these were films of my initiation; many of them were films where I was hired by someone to work on someone else's project—like *Festival.* But these are the areas that interest me, and I do find a strong connection between the two things.

Do you find any kind of contradiction between the two kinds of film?

Alk: What kind of contradictions?

Well, the differences between making a film about and with The Black Panthers and making a film with Bob Dylan. The amount of money involved, for example.

Alk: I'm not interested in the amount of money either of them have. Both have said, and in some cases continue to say, very righteous things. I think this film is a revolutionary film in terms of art. It is a kind of film that has never, ever been made. It's an extraordinary and moving film that takes people some place that they surely do not expect to go. It works. I started to say that we knew from the beginning that the film was going to be too long. There was no way that it was not going to be "objectively" too long. The only question was, were people going to say "It's too long, don't go see it," or were they going to say "It's too long. Go see it."? What it turns out they're saying is "It's too long, when can I see it again?"

Bob Dylan is by nature not a political person. But I think that he has probably had more effect on the political consciousness of an entire generation of people than any other single person.

You can believe that Bob is fully committed to filmmaking. That we are discussing the next *two* films. My own personal point of view is that it's a phenomenon, that the man who changed the face of American music has unbelievable filmic vision. And he should have an equal impact on what is potentially a great American art form.

Joe Medjuck *teaches film at the University of Toronto's Innis College and is* Take One*'s editorial director.*

THE LITTLE FELLOW

Reconsidering Charlie Chaplin

By David Thomson

Holly Dressel

He made only ten films in his last 54 years. Yet he carried the movies on his slender shoulders for the two or three decades in which he was the most famous image in the world. If anyone took that title from him it was Hitler, and *The Great Dictator,* among many other things, is the retaliatory pique of one celebrity smearing the other. Chaplin was a subversive mimic: he hoped to squash Hitler by satire, sensed it might not be adequate and delivered a righteous lecture to the camera.

Chaplin was also, perhaps, the most beautiful man in all the narcissistic, mirrored kingdom of Hollywood. On screen, though, he dulled his exquisite aura with the tramp's shabby clothes and a face pinched around a grim moustache. In private, women threw themselves at him, and he yielded to them. But on film he allowed nothing to heal the bleeding disappointment of every sentimental yearning. His screen identity was the whimsical deadbeat, and he made millions out of this resilient vagrant who lived on hope. Politically, he hardly saw beyond the rose garden of a world as united and free from friction as a laughing audience. Still, his sympathetic associations and his ardent pronouncements of wishful-thinking radicalism allied with his wealth, his unclubbability and the streak of scandal to make him a victim of American neurosis in the late 40s. He retired to Switzerland with his last adored and adoring wife, Oona O'Neill, raised an extensive family and made three final pictures that, signed by anyone else, might have been shelved or unshown.

He was not really a fluent or accomplished maker of long films—that is easier to say in recent years, just as it is no longer heresy to challenge Griffith's attitudes. As a man, Chaplin was a tangle of naïveté and pretensions, instinct and decoration, shyness and show-off. He could look and feel himself a man of the people: the London of his childhood was a dense, working-class jungle, and his early years would have stimulated Dickens, with a wastrel father and a demented mother. Yet Charlie was rarefied too: a fastidious mover (if not balletic, certainly balletomane), a dainty, crestfallen clown and a man blown like a leaf by the extravagant alteration in his own circumstances. Within a few years, he went from modest status in the English music-hall to immediate recognition all over the world. When he came to America as one of a company he was earning $75 a week. In two years his basic salary was $10,000 a week. While his imprint was so widely cherished that it is little wonder an unsophisticated man fancied that the world might need and benefit from his illumination.

Comedy is as much a matter of taste as beauty, and as subject to passing time. I find Chaplin's tramp maudlin, uncomfortable and even sinister—he is so plainly a genius in disguise that one wonders at motive. The gags are calculating, and even beneath the make-up one sometimes sees domineering eyes anticipating our response. The tramp's role was nearly flagellant for a true dandy —of dress, manners and sensibility—and invariably Charlie emerges more gracious and thoroughbred than all the girls he idolises but is let down by. There is a flowering egotism in his films unaware of itself (as opposed, say, to Welles). He is sometimes imprisoned and chilled by self-pity; and perhaps the innocent savagery of his slapstick comes from being so confined by his own nurtured sentiment that he does not feel for others. That said, *City Lights* and *Limelight* are nearly hysterical with the pathos of unrequited love; they glow and tremble like tears that never fall.

Perhaps he was once an impulsive clown, and an inspired designer of comic sequences. In short films, his commonplace narrative structures were not exposed, and he was not strained in the time-spans carried over from music-hall. Even *The Gold Rush* now looks like two shorts crudely tied together. Ten films in over 50 years may indicate how much more naturally Chaplin worked on one or two reels: *Easy Street, One A.M., The Pawnshop, The Immigrant,* and so on, extended routines the more robust for being made quickly, where Charlie's dictatorial solitude is not much infringed upon by plot or other characters as worthy as his own.

Chaplin was a world citizen, and that eminence overwhelmed and isolated him. His ubiquitous image gave us a new grasp on world community, but was as vague as Esperanto. He withdrew to the haven of secure exiles, and if Chaplin subsided in Swiss calm, perhaps his once vibrant energies had been exhausted and daunted by the changes wrought by fame. Charlie was such a celebrity that it carried him far from a useful context of reality. Surely the late films show that and underline the sheltered life stars lead.

Perhaps those first few years of work were his truest self, filled with the speed, swagger and comic violence of Victorian popular theatre. After that, he was only Charlie, the first pensive refugee of fame. No doubt the horrors of Hitlerian Europe made his idealism urgent and declaratory. But perhaps he was also trying to explain or escape the misalliance of his own glory achieved playing a derelict. He was an elusive institution, the emblem of a new medium, the soot and whitewash light of the world; yet nobody really believed in the littleness of the fellow. By insisting on that role Chaplin incurred his own dilemma. His plaintive hero asserted that some people are little. In truth, and more radically than his films appreciate, we are all the same size. The cinema had made Chaplin huge, and Charlie's wistful dream of insignificance did not alleviate that.

***David Thomson** is the author of* A Biographical Dictionary of Film, *published by William Morrow.*

DISH NIGHT
Waldo Lydecker

BLIND ITEM I: We haven't heard the last of the David Begelman / Columbia Pictures fiasco, and one person who evidently knows everything and isn't telling anything is a very short television gossip commentator.

ACT II: Usually apathetic New Yorkers gave up watching Miss Piggy and learning how to Tango Hustle like John Travolta long enough to hit the streets and mouth off to television journalists, anxious for their opinions on whether or not Liza Minnelli is following in the erratic footsteps of her Mama. Liza has been missing performances of her Broadway show "The Act" at an alarming rate, and the burning question was Did she really have a very extended case of the Texas flu or Were her supposed romances with Marty Scorsese and / or Baryshnikov unhinging both her and her marriage to Clip King Jack Haley? There haven't been so many divided opinions since *1900* hit town. On the coast, the rumours apparently hadn't reached Mischa, where he was appearing onstage in "Giselle" and everywhere else with Candy Clark.

TROOPER: Those of you who have seen Liv Ullman's expert hoofing in *The Serpent's Egg* and want more, you can look forward to Liv kicking up her heels as a singing, dancing immigrant in veteran tunesmith Richard Rodgers' upcoming legit version of golden oldie *I Remember Mama.*

WE DEMAND THE TRUTH behind the firing of Roman Polanski from *Typhoon.* Did Dino really get tired of waiting for The Little Pole to be sprung from the pokey, or did those tales about wanting Farrah Fawcett for the lead have any validity? And just which one of them wanted Mrs. Majors? Speaking of the former Angel, she surprised the goons who like to shout "There's Farrah Fawcett!" in crowded department stores by actually turning up at Macy's to shoot a scene for "Someone is Trying to Kill My Husband," or whatever it's called.

BLIND ITEM II: Studio heads may be getting ready to roll because of the six-month postponement of the release of a colossally-budgeted feature about a man who changes his clothes in a telephone booth.

SPLITSVILLE: Gail and Sidney Lumet, David and Angela Bowie, Al Pacino and Marthe Keller. Bob Evans and Phyllis George, who were SV at the beginning of the month, were back together as we went to press.

DROPOUTS: Here's how it's been pieced together; Kris Kristofferson, watching a television rerun of one of his early movies, decided that he couldn't act and that he was chucking it all to spare himself further embarrassment. He pulled out of his next project, *Hanover Square,* and was promptly replaced by *Star Wars* refugee Harrison Ford. Geneviève Bujold, hearing about the switch and not liking it one bit, also pulled out. For a girl whose last movie role was co-starring with various pieces of human meat, she's certainly being choosey.

PLAY IT AGAIN, EDIE: If you loved her in *Grey Gardens,* you should have been at Manhattan's Reno Sweeny when Edith Beale left the family manse in the Hamptons to fulfill her lifetime ambition to be a chanteuse. She joined the ranks of more seasoned warblers like Diane Keaton and Holly Woodlawn (who also play Reno's Paradise Room) by staggering through a repertoire including "As Time Goes By" and "Tea for Two" and fielding rude questions from the audience about her wealthier relatives.

FINANCIAL NEWS: We'll never see the figures, but it has been reported that the budget on the troublesome sequel to *Jaws, Jaws II* (the film which will put Jeannot Szwarc on the map and force people to learn how to pronounce his name), is more than double that of the original.

VIGNETTES: Coppola's next project may be an Orientalized version of Goëthe's *Elective Affinities*... Chubby-chasers will be disappointed to learn that Ricky Dreyfuss (so adorably porky in *The Goodbye Girl*) has dropped nearly fifty pounds... Freddie Fields, who failed to work a miracle with Margaux Hemingway, is looking for a property to make Bianca Jagger a household word... Dishiest Book of the Month Club Selection is Marie Brenner's *Going Hollywood,* an expert job of reportage in which you will find out all kinds of things you've been aching to know about wheeling and dealing in Lotusland. Marie disguised all of the characters in her last book, a novel, to the point where they were unrecognizable to even the most knowing (including me), so we're glad to see that this time she names names.

CELLULOID CLASSROOM
Stuart Samuels

Are you a college teacher using film who wants to know where to apply for grants to support your program?

Do you know how you can get a director like Frank Capra to visit your classes, free?

Where can you get copies of model courses in film studies?

The answers are right here in this column—a clearinghouse of information for teachers of film.

New Publications

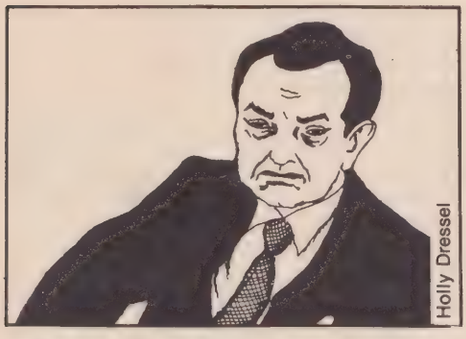
1. The Rockefeller Foundation has published a *Working Paper on Film and the Humanities,* edited by John E. O'Connor. This publication is an outgrowth of a conference on Film and the Humanities held in New York in October 1976, and contains invaluable information and insights on the problems of and approaches to the teaching of film within humanistic courses. The 80-page paper contains a summary of the conference, reprints of important articles on "Film Study and the History Classroom," "A Primer for the Basic Film / Literature Course," "Philosophy and Film," "Anthropology and Film," as well as a complete guide to journals, organizations, film rental services

Coming up in the
May issue of

TAKE ONE

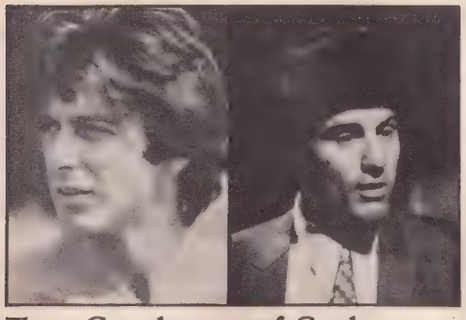
Trumbull the Magician

"Spend some time talking to Douglas Trumbull, and you come to the conclusion that this man has no business working in Hollywood." Scott Eyman interviews the creator of the incredible special effects in *Close Encounters.*



Edward G. Robinson

The dignity and natural elegance of Edward G. Robinson is beautifully reflected in this interview he gave David Overbey just before his death in 1972. Robinson remembers Fritz Lang, comments on critics, and looks back over his life in film.



Two Gentlemen of Corleone

"Al Pacino and Robert De Niro. Like book-ends, they face in resolutely opposite directions." A study by David Thomson.

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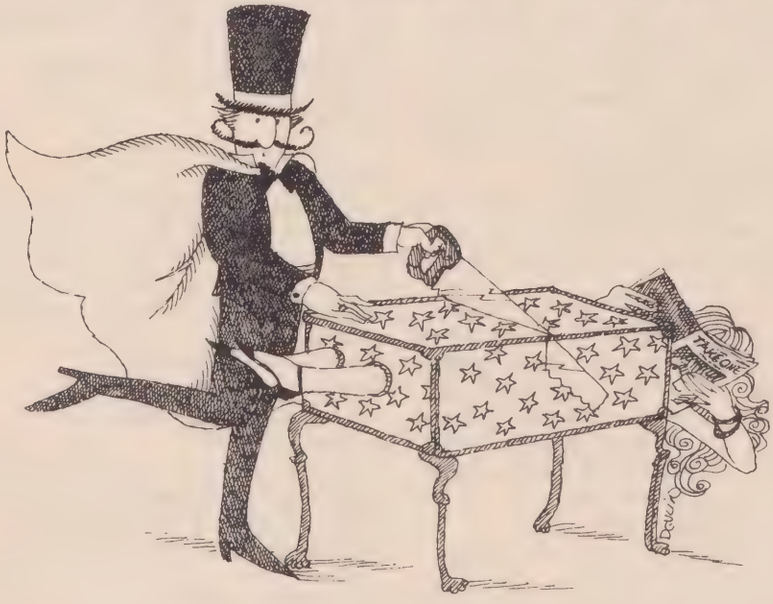

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and a comprehensive bibliography. *The Working Paper on Film and The Humanities* is available free of charge from:

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2. Peter Szekeres is a Hungarian film scholar who has put together the most comprehensive bibliography on the sociology of film available in English. It contains over 8,000 entries. If you are interested in procuring this invaluable reference, write to Peter Szekeres, 1016 Budapest, ORUM U 18 / a, Hungary.

3. The National Education Services—a branch of the AFI—has a new publication called *Factfile*. Topics include: "Guide to Classroom Use of Film / Television," "Film and TV: A Resource Guide," "Film / TV: Grants, Scholarship and Special Programs." For information write:

National Education Services
Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts
Washington, D.C. 20566

Cost is $3 for non-AFI members, $2 for AFI members.

4. The new *AFI Guide to College Courses in Film and TV* will be published March 1. It lists information about courses in over 1,100 schools. This new guide will feature special sections on careers, foreign film schools, an article by Andrew Sarris, and detailed information on courses on film taught in the U.S. Write to:

American Film Institute
Kennedy Center
Washington, D.C. 20566

5. The University Film Association publishes a *Digest* that includes a Film Research in Progress re-print service of seminar papers, working papers, and other unpublished materials deposited by scholars from all over the country. The *Digest* is available at $2.00 annual subscription by writing:

Donald Zimmerman
Dept. of Communication
Washington State University
Pullman, WA. 99163

For deposit and purchase of papers (at cost of duplication) write to:

Calvin Pryluck
Dept. of Radio, TV, and Film
The University of North Carolina
Swain Hall, O44A
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514

Some sample titles: "Bibliography of Semiology and Cinema," "Art History for Film Studies," "Brechtian Cinema?: Toward a Politics of Self-Reflexive Film," "Political Image and Myth in Some American Films."

Model Courses

Peter C. Rollins of Oklahoma State University has been developing a "Model Course in American Studies and Film," exploring American cultural values reflected in film. A 55-page annotated syllabus, including film rental information, is available free from Ms. Susanne Schall, National Humanities Institute, 53 Wall Street, New Haven, Conn. 06510.

This column invites teachers to submit model courses on film: Send syllabus and information to:

Dr. Stuart Samuels
Dept. of History
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA. 19174

Grants and Fellowships

Grants and fellowships from The National Endowment for the Humanities available to teachers using films:

1. Education Program: General Project Grants in Higher Education—grants to develop experimental courses and curricolumn materials. Write to:

Director of Educational Programs
Mail Stop 202
NEH
Washington, D.C. 20506

Deadline: April 1.

2. Fellowship Programs: Summer Stipends for College Teachers—for independent research to humanistic knowledge. Studies involving a critical, historical and theoretical understanding of film are eligible. Write to:

Division of Fellowships
NEH
Washington, D.C. 20506

Deadline: March 15.

3. Office of Planning and Analysis offers support for experimental projects in the use of TV and Film. Write to:

Office of Planning and Analysis
NEH
Washington, D.C. 20506

No specific deadline.

Special Services

1. The Visiting Artists Program of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is available to teachers of film in the U.S. and Canada. The Academy will send directors, film editors, producers, and cinematographers, to your classes free of charge. Paul Schrader, Verna Fields, and Frank Capra visited campuses last year. Host institution picks up travel and accommodation costs. To apply, write a letter of request outlining kind of visitor required, how long, what dates, to:

Ms. Karen D. Arandjelovich
Visiting Arts Program
Academy Foundation
8949 Wilshire Blvd.
Beverly Hills, CA. 90211

2. The Academy offers another valuable service. Anthony Slide is in charge of the National Film Information Service—a reference program for specific research questions. Write your particular research problem to Anthony Slide:

National Film Information Service
Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
8949 Wilshire Blvd.
Beverly Hills, CA. 90211

Tony will draw upon the extensive holdings of the Academy Library to answer your questions. Also available are photocopies of production stills and film reviews, as well as programming advice.

Conferences

1. The 2nd Annual Purdue Film Conference will be held Thursday-Saturday, March 17-19, at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Topics: Film theory, history, and film literature.

Special workshop on film education.

For information:

James Franklin
Conference Chairperson
Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literature
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907

2. The annual Conference of the Society for Cinema Studies will be held March 5-8, 1978 at Temple University, Philadelphia. Panels on the following areas: Teaching the Moving Image, History, Sociology and Ideology and Films.

For information write to:

Dr. Timothy J. Lyons
Dept. of Radio, TV, Film
School of Communications and Theatre
Temple University
Philadelphia, PA. 19122

Special Events

1. For the past two years, the University of Pennsylvania Summer School has conducted, under the direction of Seth Willenson from Films, Inc. and myself, a 3-week course on Contemporary Cinema, held at the Cannes Film Festival. Students have free access to the films and events of the Festival (over 400 films screened); daily lecturers, special seminars for students (last year, John Simon, Sergio Leone); special projects specifically connected with the Festival. Students live in the University-run Château La Napoule (3 miles from Cannes), and get one full course credit for the experience and work.

For information:

Joan Campbell
College of General Studies
210 Logan Hall
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA. 19174

Dates: May 13-June 3.

2. Joseph Strick (*Ulysses*) is offering his new film, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* to college campuses before its U.S. commercial release. If you want to organize a special teaching event around the new film write to:

Joseph Strick
c / o Laser Film Corporation
527 Madison Avenue
Suite 602
New York, New York 10022

***Stuart Samuels** is a lecturer in Film History at the University of Pennsylvania, and is a co-director of the Walnut Street Theatre Film and Video Center.*

NOTES FROM THE NEW CINEMA

Bob Cowan

The present New York showcases of experimental or personal films are beginning to get me down a little. It's not so much the films themselves which are depressing me, but the fact that more and more of the showcases are turning away from individual film artists in order to promote video pieces and / or various academic social documentaries of one sort or another. Works by the individualistic and personal artist in film are being seen less and less. It is a dreary state of affairs. Nevertheless, here are two creative filmmakers — both new to me and both worthy of mention.

Paul Poggiali presented two films at Millennium Film Workshop. In the first film, *Agon*, we see a blank white wall. After a moment, the dark figure of a man slowly moves along the wall from right to left, accompanied by the weight of his own shadows. His hands search the space around him as he moves in hesitant steps. About three quarters of the way across, he begins a pantomimic dialogue with his shadow; then the camera follows him as he moves abruptly, attempting to escape from the screen frame. No matter what he does, the camera eye follows. There begins a taunting game between himself and the camera. He encourages the camera eye to catch up with him as both try to anticipate each other's movements. The camera then ceases to move, apparently tired of the chase. The man disappears from the frame, only to re-enter a few minutes later from the bottom. The camera makes a few languid attempts to follow him. With more coaxing he forces the camera to respond. The camera eye begins to pay more friendly attention, and a two-way conversation of movement commences. After a time, the man involves himself in movements and gestures not directly related to those of the camera, but then turns on the staring eye in an attempt to coerce it to his will. The camera continues to stare coldly at the performer. He becomes, as a result, more agitated, he blocks out the image with his body, backs off again, expecting the lens to follow him. It refuses. It has the upper hand in the situation. The man lunges at the camera faster and faster until his whole face fills the screen. The camera eye remains steadfast and impassive. The threats eventually cease, and the exhausted-looking protagonist stares point blank into the lens, turns around and disappears off screen. We are left with a blank wall. Finally he returns, and self-consciously stalks the camera, his gaze never leaving the lens. He continues to encircle the camera, and as he does so the camera follows. As the film comes to a close he is still encircling the lens, but the relationship between the two of them is one of good humour and acceptance.

The second film, entitled *A Filmic Romance*, was much like the first except that it was in color and shot outdoors with a young girl as the protagonist. The energy level on *A Filmic Romance* lacked focus, it meandered endlessly. It also had a coy quality about it which I found annoying, reducing the whole film to a kind of corny boy meets girl (in this case the camera eye was the boy), with predictable simplistic narrative. The camera eye, instead of being an abstract idea, is transformed into a male seducer, and a very banal seducer at that. In *Agon* the relationship between the actor and the camera is not between two people, it is between humanoid and abstract entity. The camera eye has no sexual definition; it is god-like, a fatalistic personage with great power, a reflection of the man himself in the disguise of a camera, or perhaps it represents a struggle with his own primitive consciousness. It is a man trying to arrive at some meaningful compromise with the impersonal universe. In *A Filmic Romance* the camera eye is reduced to the role of a mere flirt.

Bruce Wood shoots on high contrast black and white film. Everything is done in the camera, and not otherwise manipulated except for some simple editing. No image is actually repeated, although sections of the films have the characteristics of loops. The cumulative effect is very painterly, as if one were participating in the physical act of painting itself. In *River of Stars* one feels the sensation of the applying of strokes in black and white, of various feathery textural layers. Short sequences are interrupted by solid black portions which serve as resting stations along the way. There is a tremendous variety of textural patterns. For a few moments they reveal their natural sources (water, etc.), then transform later on into pure abstractions. They blend effortlessly one into the other through a consistent variety of means.

Arctic Desire contains congested elliptical forms in motion. The screen undulates, ripples and scatters, through means of sharp and then indistinct focus. The naturalistic and the abstract are never far apart, the graphic possibilities are marvelously exploited. Moving images undulate in a sensuous glittering space of white flames and shadows.

As in the previous films, the visuals in *Airless Passage* are highly organic and at times take on a decidedly three-dimensional appearance. The water movements ebb and flow with the thickness of liquid mercury. At times there are many layers, and the individual moving planes can be focused on independent of each other, creating a different series of movements with each viewing, depending on which layer you wish to follow. Diagonal ripples are placed over horizontal ripples, producing a sinking and rising sensation with a suggestion of flesh, hair and flowing blood streams.

Island Design is texturally the most contrasty and varied of the Wood films, except that the use of even more water movements wears a bit thin. *Edge Forces* takes off at a rapid pace, with spastic and violent changes plunging you into a whirlwind of fragments that abruptly slow to the calmness of smouldering fires before returning to furious speed and activity. Action painting visualized. The pulsating movement within the frame is so strong that at times the edges of the screen seem to be expanding and contracting, verging on collapse from the pressure within. At intervals the image is interrupted by a straightforward literal shot of a piece of gauze repeatedly moving away from the camera. The linear textures (grass-weeds?) resemble calligraphy.

In *Molten Shadow* the source imagery is undecipherable, with the exception of one image that looks like clusters of steel wool being torn apart. *Frozen Flight* takes off in a slightly different direction from the previous works. There is a reminder of the abstract animated films of Oskar Fischinger, except that the source material of Wood's film is made from natural objects and not drawn at all.

If I have any negative feelings about Wood's work as seen in this particular program it is that one film shown by itself would be quite powerful... but in the viewing of all of them together there is too much similarity from one to the next to sustain them as a unit. My wonder is why, after making so many successful films with similar visual orientation and textural characteristics, he did not attempt to explore different areas. Having exhausted most of the possibilities of his deliberate confinement to a single basic groove, he seems in danger of becoming a one-note artist. Still, these films are full of the miraculous, and his visual energy is undeniable.

***Bob Cowan** is a Canadian prize-winning filmmaker living and working in Brooklyn, New York.*

SPEAKING INDEPENDENTLY

Amalie Rothschild

Independent Cinema Artists and Producers (ICAP) is a non-profit organization established to help all of us in the independent film and video community realize the potential of cable television as an outlet for distribution and exhibition. Within the two years of its existence, ICAP has both developed an awareness among filmmakers that such a (relatively new) market exists for their work, and has actually managed to ensconce the independent film and video piece as a viable component of pay cable programming. It has succeeded in negotiating contracts with pay cable systems *on behalf* of the filmmaker, returning 75% of the cablecast fees to the filmmaker him / herself, while retaining 25% for ICAP's administrative costs. These fees are based on the length of the film, the number of subscribers to the pay cable system, and the number of times shown.

ICAP arose out of a need among filmmakers to earn an income from their work commensurate to the size of their audience. It was begun in 1975 by filmmakers *for* filmmakers. The original concept evolved out of the Cable Committee of the AIVF. It was the brainchild of Charles Levine, who then worked for its implementation with Kitty Morgan and Marc N. Weiss. The basic work has been made possible through grants and donations. Since it is impossible for ICAP to exist and work on the 25% it receives from sales, the organization continues to be maintained through three separate grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Markle Foundation.

ICAP's current board of directors includes George Stoney, a Documentary filmmaker (*All My Babies*) and Professor of Documentary Film Production at NYU; Bill Sloan, the head of the film division of the New York Public Library; Mirra Bank, an independent filmmaker and a member of New Day Films; Bob Fass, the host of *Radio Unnameable* on New York's WBAI; Robert Sklar, chairman of the Cinema Studies Department at NYU and author of *Movie-Made America*; Gerhard Meilen, a lawyer; and myself. The daily work of the organization is carried by a staff of three—Kitty Morgan, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of ICAP and also a member of AIVF's board of directors; Susan Eenigenburg, recently hired as an Assistant Administrator; and John Giancola, hired in March 1977 as the Co-ordinator of Pay Television Sales.

Home Box Office has been one of ICAP's main clients. In 1975 ICAP signed its first contract with HBO. Since that time, there have been many personnel changes in their programming department, and subsequent negotiations have been slow and lacking in continuity. Since Giancola's arrival on the scene, however, the relations between ICAP and HBO have become healthier, and more stable. Besides HBO, ICAP's principal client has been Showtime, Viacom's pay cable branch. Sales are currently pending with Telemine (closed-circuit television for apartment buildings), and Channel 68, an over-the-air pay system operating out of Newark, New Jersey.

Most of the cable executives have little background in film or video, and they prefer to deal directly with distributors, rather than individuals. ICAP came about as a direct result of management's aversion to dealing with the individual filmmaker. Since 1975, substantial inroads have been made, and ICAP's staff has developed a personal rapport with the people in the programming departments of the various pay cable systems. These people have come to depend on ICAP, knowing that they can call, request a three-minute film for a certain slot, and have it at the station on a moment's notice.

ICAP and the pay cable systems have thus created a promising relationship built on mutual trust and responsibility. In its incipient stages, cable television has been receptive to any type of film that sells. ICAP's first contracts were for multiple showings for individual films that were shown in intermissions between the regular features. Many systems now request block programming or packages. This packaging can benefit the filmmaker, however, if the film has an odd length or is a bit more offbeat. Pulled together with a group of other, more conventional films and presented as part of a package, this film will then get the exposure it might never have had otherwise.

But at this stage of the game, the *fact* that the independent film is integrated into the programming of this growing market is very significant. A commercial mass-media audience is created for this work and the future is open instead of closed. But the filmmaker should understand that representation by ICAP provides more than just revenue—if the material is outstanding, it serves to show the pay system how great independent film is.

ICAP continues to sell films individually, as part of a package, or as part of a series. Length of contract with the pay system ranges from a month, to six months, to a year or more.

ICAP accepts films of all types and lengths. 16mm and 3 / 4 inch cassettes are preferred, although 35mm, and 2 inch types can sometimes be used. If a piece has been widely seen on network or public television, it is generally not eligible. ICAP contracts only with independent filmmakers and videomakers, and not with distributors. The contracts are non-exclusive, enabling the filmmakers to make other distribution or exhibition arrangements for his / her work. It is important, however, for filmmakers to retain these pay cable rights when drawing up other non-theatrical distribution contracts. Many commercial distributors are specifically asking for pay cable rights now. These distributors have neither the connections, the specific interest, nor the expertise ICAP has, specializing as it does in this area *on behalf* of the filmmaker.

ICAP's contracts are not standardized, and the payment arrangements vary. Initially the filmmaker signs an "A contract," allowing ICAP to represent the film and negotiate with the pay systems. At this point ICAP will require a print of the film or tape, so that it can be available in its offices for potential showing on short notice. (Gradually ICAP's budget is expanding to cover the expense of transferring some works to tape, so that the filmmaker can retain the print of his / her work.) Then, if the work is sold for showing on one of the pay cable systems, a "B contract" is drawn up with the filmmaker, who has right of refusal if the financial or other arrangements are not acceptable. ICAP does not want to undersell its films, and does everything possible to negotiate a fair fee before signing the final contract.

So far, within this developing market, ICAP has been able to generate almost $20,000.00 in gross receipts, returning 75% to the individual artists it represents. In many cases the sales involved early, and even the first, work of the video or filmmaker. Currently, the revenues from a sizeable pay system may be seen as comparable to those obtainable from a moderately-sized independent TV station in a large city. For example, the rate can range between $30-50 per minute for the rights to four transmissions within a given month's programming period.

Still, we have a way to go. We are market reviewers, as much as salespersons. If a pay system is "wild" about an independent film, the filmmaker can get substantive revenues from repeated plays or from our negotiations, but in many cases the revenues are not astronomical. (It's helpful to point out that the largest pay system has only 700,000 subscribers.)

Filmmakers who wish to submit their work to ICAP for possible representation should be aware of the National Cable Television Association convention. Held in the spring, NCTA is the largest and one of the most important gatherings for the cable industry. ICAP always sends a representative to promote its films. Vital deals and connections are made at this convention. Those filmmakers who submit their films and tapes in time will have their work featured in the catalogues and other material ICAP prepares for this event.

With the proliferation of pay cable systems over the past few years, it is essential for those of us in independent film and video to keep abreast of the rapidly evolving developments in communications technology. Hopefully, someday ICAP can assume a position in the film industry equal to ASCAP in the music industry, protecting artists' rights and assuring the payment of royalties. We in the filmmaking community must understand the ways in which this new means of distribution and exhibition can work for us, making it pay for us individually as well as collectively. Cable television might just become a primary source for making people aware of an alternative viewing experience. The formation of ICAP is a promising beginning, and perhaps before too long, more and more people will not only be able, but will want and demand to see our kinds of films. Any filmmaker interested in having his / her work represented by ICAP should mail promotional material, e.g., stills, brochures or reviews, and a concise description of the film with running time and credits to ICAP, P.O. Box 775, Canal Street Station, New York, New York 10013. *Films or tapes must not be submitted without writing first.*

***Amalie Rothschild** is an independent filmmaker and a founding member of New Day Films, the distribution cooperative. Her films include* Woo Who? May Wilson, It Happens to Us, *and* Nana, Mom and Me.

PARIS LETTER

Geoffrey Minish

Paris is not the filmgoer's paradise it was a decade or so ago, but it still offers a wider range of interesting movies than any other city, including New York. That's one reason why I can't get too excited over the week-long Paris International Film Festival, which marked its third anniversary in November. What Paris needs is not a festival but a more adventurous attitude on the part of distributors and exhibitors. Jean-Luc Godard was lucky to make *Breathless* in an era when the big French circuits were willing to chance a low-budget film by an unknown director, which they rarely do nowadays. (A recent excepton to this rule, the year's-end hit *Diabolo Menthe*, was picked up by Gaumont in a successful gamble on the film's appeal to the teenage market.) Today *Breathless* would probably open in a Latin Quarter art house and if takings were poor, could vanish for good after a week. The Paris festival, which showcases art-house movies, should in theory widen their potential audience, at any rate in Paris itself, but I see no evidence that it does. Whatever influence it has seems negative: the big American and French companies boycotted the 1977 festival, apparently fearing their entries might be panned by the critics. At the festival's end, organiser Pierre-Henri Deleau announced that in 1978 there will be prizes. Whether this will prove a bait for the majors is questionable. But it should at least promote one or two deserving films.

The festival's principal catch was an official Polish entry, Krzysztof Zanussi's *Camouflage*, a metaphor movie which won the Grand Prix at the 1977 Gdansk festival. There were reports that the Polish authorities were reluctant to export the film, with its downbeat view of Polish society. The setting is a summer holiday camp where a group of provincial university students are preparing for a competition in linguistics. Their supervisors are a pleasant young lecturer, Jaroslaw (Piotr Garlicki), and his senior, Jakub (Zbigniew Zapasiewicz), a pseudo-affable, totally cynical expert in survival who delights in attacking what he regards as Jaroslaw's idealistic illusions. Jaroslaw has a protégé in the camp, Raczyk, an anarchistic youth on the blacklist of the university vice-rector in whose name the camp is run. Jakub warns Jaroslaw, who has applied for a scholarship to Britain, that his sympathy for Raczyk could be damaging to him.

The competition is held, and Raczyk's thesis, although applauded by his fellow students, fails to win the prize. The vice-rector arrives at the camp for the prize-giving, where a drunken Raczyk attacks him. Events then take a course which culminates in Jaroslaw and Jakub having a showdown that neither wins.

The essence of the film is the relationship between Jaroslaw and Jakub. This must, I think, be regarded in politico-symbolic terms, discounting any question of even latent homosexuality, at least on Jaroslaw's part. He in fact falls for an Anglo-Polish woman student, Nelly (Christine Paul), although, to quote from Film Polski's English-languauge synopsis, "their sympathy... is not to be reaffirmed by an erotic act." Jakub's attitude toward Jaroslaw may have sexual undertones—one night he takes Jaroslaw down to the riverside and shows him (Film Polski again) "Nelly having an intercourse with a student"—but his primary motivation seems to be the destructiveness of the self-hating, coupled with envy of Jaroslaw's youth.

It is, needless to say, Jaroslaw with whom we identify. Unfortunately, this is not quite as easy as the foregoing outline may suggest. Zanussi is too much of an artist for Manichean simplicities, and Jaroslaw, for all his decency, has a weakness: he is ambitious. He kowtows to the vice-rector, who has the power to grant or withhold the scholarship he covets, and when the vice-rector orders him to call the police to expel Raczyk from the camp, he obeys, however reluctantly. Not much hope for Poland, then, from its liberal intellectuals, if they can be bought off that easily. None at all, of course, from "reformed" Stalinists like Jakub, who admits to Jaroslaw: "In the past I have destroyed people." What about Polish youth? Zanussi shows the students as capable of rebellion, but quickly brought back into line. Which leaves Raczyk. "He has that touch of madness which you will never have," Jakub tells Jaroslaw, who sadly agrees. But if Zanussi is saying that Poland's future depends on its Raczyks, bad luck Poland. Raczyk's demonstration at the linguistics competition strikes the lay viewer as based on dubious logic, his attack on the vice-rector is childish, and he is helpless when the police come for him. From a political standpoint, this is an extremely depressing film.

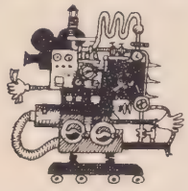
But not from an artistic one. The unobtrusive fluidity of Zanussi's camera movements is a pleasure in itself, and the dialogue he has written for his screenplay is of considerably higher intellectual calibre than we are accustomed to in the Western cinema, even if Jakub's harping on the theme of "Look out for Number One" does get a bit monotonous. I'd guess that Zanussi is an avid theatregoer: the Jakub-Jaroslaw relationship has more than a touch of Iago and Othello, and the dialogue, even in subtitles, is occasionally reminiscent of minor Shaw. Or in the cinema, major Bergman.

No praise, however, for the Japanese entry in the official section, Shuji Terayama's *The Boxer*. It's a male-comradeship epic about an ex-champion featherweight who makes a vicarious comeback by training a youngster anxious to win an amateur crown. As the aspirant has a chronically weak ankle, he is not exactly promising material, and his mentor also has a health problem: like Jimmy Cagney in *City For Conquest*, he is going blind. Comes the Big Fight, and the two contestants batter each other to the point where they both collapse on the canvas. We look through the jellied

eyes of the ex-champ as he strains to see whether it is his boy who is pulling himself to his feet, thereby winning the match. Terayama, in short, exploits blindness to obtain a cheap cinematic effect.

The festival inaugurated what was optimistically described as a film market, confined to projection rooms on the Avenue Hoche, the miniscule one owned by Lira Films and a couple of larger ones in Claude Lelouch's Club 13 diagonally opposite. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Satan's Brew*, somewhat shopsoiled (he made it in 1976, and it's kicked around a few festivals), was shown in the Lira room, a reflection perhaps of the fact that French critics as a whole do not share their "Anglo-Saxon" colleagues' admiration for Fassbinder. I had to sit on the aisle floor to watch the film, and the projectionist—they must have borrowed him from the Cinémathèque Française—mixed up a couple of the reels. Even under those conditions, however, the film came across as a grotesquely funny political parable owing more to the Three Stooges than to Douglas Sirk, and one of the best things Fassbinder has done.

__Geoffrey Minish__ is a Canadian journalist working for Agence France Presse. He is our Paris correspondent.



TECHNICAL NOTES

Bob Parent

Since my last column went to press, the earth passed its annual winter solstice—spawning new energies and ideas—and by the time this column is read, the equinox will be close upon us. Therefore, for my first treatise of the new year, I would like to lead off with a concept—my conception of the ideal, or 'dream' editing console. (Manufacturers take note.)

Design of editing tables has come a long, long way since the years of domination by the upside-down Moviola clap-traps. However, none of the manufacturers have yet mentioned—let alone marketed—an editing console wherein a cut, fade or dissolve could be previewed and readjusted to satisfaction *without cutting and splicing the workprint!* And with an interlocked sound cut, too! Yet technology for such a table has been available since the advent of programmable automatic controls in film printers.

Several radical departures from present working methods would be necessary to accomplish the ultimate. First, both picture and sync tracks would each be edited in A and B roll format rather than contemporary single strand, and the console would have a total of *six* tracks! They would be A & B sync sound, music and EFX. Second, there would be a control tape (magnetic) coupled to the frame counter on which would be recorded all the functional commands. Third, an additional control panel would contain pushbuttons to activate and encode the basic effects available in the laboratory: straight cuts, fades, dissolves in all the standard lengths; sound cuts, fade-ins and outs, cross-fades, loudness changes, tone modifications, etc. Fourth, the screen would be much larger, at least 18" x 24" (45 x 60cm). Fifth, a master tape would be coupled to the system to record all of the final decisions along with corresponding time-base code information and become the master guide for conforming the original.

This editor would differ from present 2-picture consoles in that this unit would have only *one screen,* as in a theater. Each track would be projected on the same area of the same screen, but each track would also have a variable shutter controlled by the button panel or recorded pulse on the control tape. Likewise for the sound controls. The counter system would be locked to the picture-A track. All other tracks would have individual advance and retard controls plus optional interlock between picture-A and sound-A and picture-B and sound-B tracks.

The editor would assemble full takes in sequence on alternate tracks, filling in the gaps with "fill leader". As each desired cut was reached, the appropriate button would be pressed and the function would be recorded on the basic control tape. The transport would then be stopped and sufficiently rewound for a re-play, with the desired cut, fade or dissolve occurring as programmed. If the cut were unsatisfactory, adjustments could be made with the advance / retard until a satisfactory cut was achieved. Only the final selection would be retained on the basic control tape. At the same time, the sync track(s) would also be previewed in interlock and the commands duly recorded on the basic control tape. As the crossover position of each cut was determined, the "fill" leader would be lengthened or shortened accordingly so that the head "alignment start marks" were restored for each strand.

Once a scene or the entire film had been so assembled, it and the control tape could be rewound and then previewed with *all cuts and EFX in full continuity* and on a screen size adequate for substantial evaluation without the necessity and distraction of myriad trial splices and marks on the workprint. In most cases two additional sound tracks would be ample for adding wild sound, music, EFX, etc. so that an entire film could be edited, previewed, and modified until finaled. The larger screen size would allow not only the editor but all of the decision-makers (or clients) on a production to sit comfortably and evaluate the film and make on-the-spot changes.

The control tapes (or "floppy discs" as used in typesetting equipment) would record all picture cuts, fades, dissolves, superimpositions with corresponding sound cuts and modifications, identification of each take, edge numbers, time-base code information, etc. A two-tape system would be needed (as is used in typesetting for the insertion of new copy or corrections)—one in playback and one in record so that the tape in the record mode could contain all alterations and additions without the loss of previously recorded information, and therefore become the "master tape."

The console design could also contain the necessary circuitry to automatically align and maintain alignment of footage and track using a time-base code system(s).

By now, most editors are probably ready to burst with the question: "Six tracks means twelve plates and the largest console now is only eight plates and that seems to be the maximum practical arm-reach. Who's going to be able to reach for twelve?" Well, that question presupposes that all twelve plates would be on the same surface level. But do they have to be? I feel that as many as *sixteen plates* could be arranged more compactly than present 8-plate consoles merely by using more than one level.

Anyhow, this is my "Jules Verne" for 1978.

A few months ago, GAF announced that they were discontinuing the manufacture and sale of consumer photographic products, citing the futility of competition with Kodak for more than a token piece of the market. Eastman Kodak is now the only North American manufacturer of consumer photographic materials, a few foreign products being the alternatives.

Undaunted, Agfa-Gevaert of Germany / Belgium is making a bid for a slice of the American market. Gevachrome print film —the first dye-coupler reversal print stock with a process for silver soundtracks, low contrast development and the most faithful rendition of Black skin tones—gained a strong foothold with the TV studios and networks and has been available for almost ten years.

Most competing film manufacturers have found that the only way that they can cut even a small wedge out of the pie is by designing their materials to be compatible with Kodak processing chemistries. Otherwise very few labs would invest in the cost of

separate processing equipment. Gevachrome materials, on the other hand, require different processing formulae and temperatures (25°C, 77°F) for optimum performance.

About two years ago, Gevaert replaced their 600 series of color reversal camera films with the new 700 series in the European and Canadian markets. And starting this past December, they have started marketing their camera stocks in the U.S. market. Cinelab, one of the four U.S. labs that have provided Gevachrome print services for the past ten years, has added the processing equipment to handle the new camera emulsions.

The 700 series comprises three camera stocks and one print film. (The type 780 print stock is similar to the current 9.03 except that it is compatible with the Gevachrome II processing for the camera stocks.) All of the camera films are balanced for Xenon arc projection (desirable for TV transfer) but prints can be balanced for tungsten projection lamps. All three emulsions are fine grain, low contrast and high acutance. Type 700 is intended for general production filming with a type B (3200°K) balance and an ASA index of 80. Type 710-tungsten and 720-daylight are each rated at ASA 125 and are intended for news and documentary work where higher speeds are needed. They can be pushed as much as three stops with good results. Type 700 with its gamma of 1.2 and wide exposure latitude is intended mainly for making prints, while the news films have a slightly higher gamma for projection as well as printing.

In the manufacturing process, they incorporate double coating of each layer and the inclusion of anti-halation filtration in each interlayer plus the bottom layer. Altogether there are eleven layers with a total thickness of slightly less than 11 microns—well within the thin emulsion range. And the processing time is almost half the Gevachrome I time without increasing the temperatures.

In the New York City area, contact: Agfa-Gevaert, Inc., 275 North St., Teterboro, NJ 07608; and Cinelab, Inc., 421 W 54th St., NYC 10019.

***Bob Parent** is a New York freelance photographer / filmmaker. He is a member of SMPTE, an instructor and member of the Board of Directors of Millennium Film Workshop, and a member of AIVF.*

WOMEN IN FILM

Kay Armatage

Kay Armatage's column is a continuation of her examination of feminist film criticism, begun in the November issue of Take One. *The conclusion of this discussion will appear in our May issue.*

I believe we are basing our notions of what women filmmakers do on a pre-defined and pre-selected sample. Thus we hear discussions on "the female aesthetic" centering around notions like "women have a different sense of time." This is an important one, so let's examine it for a minute. Women have a different sense of time. This is natural, so the story goes, as the rhythms of our lives are different: repetitive, ritualistic, slow, gentle, human. Women aren't contributors to the dehumanized, depersonalized, manipulative, exploitative, commercial jack-booted rat-race. We don't like violence, excessive action, or fast-cutting. We like long slow takes (e.g. the films of Duras, Chantal Ackerman, Joyce Wieland.) We prefer, in addition, *mise-en-scène*—as a human way of placing characters in their environment and of allowing the audience to make their own selections from the scene—as opposed to *montage,* where you only see what the filmmaker wants you to see and keep moving right along please. We like to examine fully one or two days in a person's life, rather than assume that we can tell the whole of something by selecting representative parts, for this is what has created the distorted stereotypes of women which we reject.

Now I think there is some truth to all of this, and it's certainly true of the films that I like best. But let us not delude ourselves into thinking that these aspirations and methods are somehow "female," or that they define "women's films." Certainly we ought not to do this by rejecting some women and their works as somehow not qualifying as women and women's films. For one thing, it's reactionary and retrogressive to assume that women by their nature are revolutionary at best and are at least human, personal, gentle, non-manipulative, non-exploitative. The early suffragists tried that one: give women the vote and we'll make politics honest, end wars, and bring humanity back into history because we are better people. And we got the vote and didn't change anything and so were seen to be ineffectual. Now the same banner is waved by Martha Coolidge and others, and it is just the flip side of the "women have a different sense of time" argument: let women into Hollywood or the commercial film industry anywhere and we'll change the face of cinema. But there are women in Hollywood—notably as editors, producers, and screen-writers—and lots of them. A woman edited *Jaws,* for god's sake. But we ignore these women, and reject them from our feminist film gatherings. Then we build our sand castles, aprons flying from the turrets and positive role models guarding the gates.

It's my view that on no account should we deny the variety of modes, methods, subjects, and points of view that women are exhibiting at every level of cinema. We can't afford to. We're still searching for our history, and we shouldn't be distorting history in the present as we go. We're now working to retrieve lost women from the past, like Nell Shipman and Alice Guy Blache and Lois Weber. At the rate we're going, in another fifty years the new crop of feminists in film are going to have to do the same work to retrieve women filmmakers of the sixties and seventies—and are going to get stopped at the same dead ends of lack of information and lack of contemporary response. We'll have preserved a small number of "feminist" films: the ones that hammered the right reflexes. (I'm reminded of a woman in Edinburgh who introduced herself as a producer: "I'm going to make a real feminist film," she said. "It's about five artists talking about their problems as women.")

And we'll have lost all the rest. We'll still be trying to sort out what women do in cinema, still defining a women's aesthetic based on a miniscule sample. For let's face it, no one else is going to write that history for us. The feminists in film are the ones who will have to make it their business to know what women are doing and to provide criticism, commentary, and an ever-growing audience for women's work. And we should know as much about it as we can, rather than to claim some small right-on aspect of it as our own, and write off the rest.

I'm not arguing here for some liberal over-all celebration of the fact that we do make films and that we like them no matter what they are. I'm suggesting a two-pronged activity for the feminist critical project. We need to write our history as it happens, and that means we have to know what we're doing, from movement films to movement outcasts like Lizzie Borden's *Re-Grouping,* from independents to avant-garde to commercial, yea even exploitation. We also need a feminist analysis which can deal with all sorts of films by men and women, and which can reach beyond the mere identification of positive role models.

***Kay Armatage** is a Toronto teacher, writer and filmmaker. She was the co-director of* Jill Johnston: October 1975.

COFFEE, BRANDY AND CIGARS

Herman Weinberg

Portrait of America: The ten best American films as polled by half of the American Film Institute's 35,000 members: *Gone With the Wind* (best), *Citizen Kane, Casablanca, The African Queen, The Grapes of Wrath, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Singin' in the Rain, Star Wars, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Wizard of Oz.*

The twelve best (international) as polled by some 125 critics from around the world by the Cinémathèque de Belgique for the Brussels Exposition of 1958: *Potemkin* (best), *Grand Illusion, The Gold Rush, Earth, The Last Laugh, Citizen Kane, Caligari, Mother, Bicycle Thieves, Intolerance, Greed, The Passion of Joan of Arc.*

In certain experiments, chemicals are stained so that they may become visible. In Sternberg's films his backgrounds were similarly "stained" (accented) with the film's emotion so that this emotion could be felt. There was a pulse beating from the first image on...

Out of the reality of Stroheim's upbringing he made a fiction and out of the fiction of his art he made a reality. Stroheim of the movies—not of his parents born but of his films.

"One enjoys a story because one is in sympathy with the story teller. The same tale told by someone else would be of no interest. It is the same with films." (Jean Renoir)

"In art all that matters is the form." (André Gide)

A flaw in *The Devil is a Woman* that no one ever pointed was the incongruity of Cesar Romero's voice with the words he had to say, how lack-luster was the timbre of his speech and pronunciation compared to the cultured resonance of Lionel Atwill's voice in the same film.

In Pabst's *L'Atlantide,* what is Antinea but the nymph in the *Odyssey* of Homer who keeps a man captive for love?

The jungle vines in Sternberg's *Anatahan* and the paper streamers in his *Underworld* derive from the same impulse.

Wilde's *Salome,* that psalm, that ode to Christ...

How many who saw Ophuls' *La Ronde* knew that Schnitzler (who was a doctor before becoming a playwright) wrote *Reigen,* on which it was based, partly for the same reason that Ibsen wrote *Ghosts*? To show how syphilis was spread.

Compare the soft lighting and texture of old movie stills (especially those from the silent era) with the present new ones with their "plastic" quality, like the surface of formica table-tops.

A recent movie book I liked was the Douglas Fairbanks one by James Welsh and John Tibbetts. I like it because it is a labor of love, like all good works are, besides which I am in the vanguard of Fairbanks' fans. Victor Herbert's "Pan Americana" always reminded me of Fairbanks, especially the tango in it (which evoked for me the unforgettable steps to it that Fairbanks and Lupe Velez did in *The Gaucho*).

True sophistication in the films exists in maintaining a tension between candor and discretion. It puts to rout all thoughts of "permissiveness" and "what you can now get away with." But, alas, even Luis Bunuel, last of the great "old guard" still making films, must give them "what you can now get away with." In his latest film, *That Obscure Object of Desire*, he has Conchita dance naked before a bunch of Chinese. In Pierre Louys' *Woman and Puppet*, from which his film derives, Conchita dances naked before two Englishmen (remember Toulouse-Lautrec's "L'Anglais au Moulin Rouge"?)—but a bunch of smirking Chinese is more exotic, more perverse, *n'est-ce pas?* Sternberg, in *The Devil is a Woman* (also derived from the same story), couldn't have Dietrich dance naked (not in 1935 or any other time), so he substitutes a scene which brings him closer by far to Louys than Bunuel, for all his "exoticism,"... for all his frontal female nudity. *"Et tu, Brute?"*

Carole Bouquet in That Obscure Object of Desire. *Giving them what you can now get away with.*

In the book, Mateo is furious at Conchita's display. He orders her out, to follow him. He won't hurt her, "But out!!" "I shall no more leave this place than Christ left the cross," she cried. "And you're not going to touch me..." (Remember the Sternberg scene here?) You'd better read the book, it outwits both films. But film to film, in this "duel," Sternberg draws blood while Bunuel is left with his explosions which have nothing to do with Louys' excruciating tale.

In *Time in the Sun*, the film Marie Seton

(*continued on page 50*)

In my last column in the last paragraph, quoting Kafka on swearing (apropos the foul language in Slapshot), *the sentence "It is an insult to the soul and a murderous offense against grace" was mis-printed as being "against race."*

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BOOKS

NEWS

Wide Angle is "a film quarterly of theory, criticism and practice" that is being produced by the good people at the Athens International Film Festival, with the co-operation of Ohio University. The issue we saw was dedicated to Japanese Cinema (Okamoto, Mishima, Ozu, Oshima) with side-bars on Polanski, Duras, Rohmer and others. Subscriptions are $6.50 a year in North America, $8.00 a year overseas, from Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio 45701.

Chelsea-Lee Books (Box 66273, LA 90066) has announced a new series of books on science-fiction, fantasy and horror films, based on 25 years of research by Walt Lee. The first volume, covering 1940, 1941 and 1942, will appear this spring, with additional volumes appearing at 6-month intervals, until the genre is covered from the 1890s to the present. Each 8-and-one-half x 11-inch volume will contain about 80,000 words of text and some 100 pages of photos, and will sell for $14.95 (hard-cover). Pre-publication price is $9.95.

The folks at Motion Picture Laboratories (781 Main Street, Memphis, TN 38101) have recently published (as Vol. 19, No. 4 of their regular "MPL Recorder") a handy guide called *Theatrical Distribution: Hazardous to Your Health*, which should be of interest to any aspiring filmmaker. It's yours for the asking.

The Scolar Press (39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH) has just published (at 20 pounds Sterling in cloth, 12 in paper) a two-volume reprint (complete) of *The Penguin Film Review, 1946-1949*. Original copies have become rare—and complete sets virtually impossible to obtain—so the fact that this material (which includes the writings of such people as Kracauer, Lotte Eisner, Fritz Lang, David Lean and even Eisenstein) is newly available, will be welcome news to film librarians and scolars.

An offbeat source of film-related publications is The Oakland Museum (1000 Oak Street, Oakland, CA 94607). Their titles include a series of publications relating to the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and Allan Ulrich's *The Art of Film Music* (interviews with, and comments by, five of Hollywood's best-known composers).

Film Canadiana 1976-1977 is now available (293 pp., $15.95, from Canadian Film Institute, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7). Now in its fifth year, this series continues to be the most comprehensive source available on activities in the Canadian film industry, with—this year—over 1000 films listed and cross-indexed.

Screen Writes:

Producers David Permut and Mark Travis have aquired *Buried Alive*—the Janis Joplin biography—for the screen... Joseph Wambaugh has already written a screenplay of his novel *The Black Marble*, and is planning an active role in the production of any feature film that comes out of it... Henry Winkler has bought—for his own company—the screen rights to *Hamburger Heaven*, the James Trivers novel about a young man who rebels against his job with a fast-food chain... Paramount Pictures—in a deal that only a handful of box-office stars have been able to pull off—has given author Sidney Sheldon a percentage of the gross from first dollar (rather than from the break-even point) for film rights to his *Bloodline*. Sheldon, who may also produce the film, turned down a straight million-dollar offer from Universal to take the Paramount deal... Universal did manage, however, to come away with the movie rights to the Rosemary Rogers costume-romance best-seller (2-million-plus), *Sweet Savage Love*, and the studio also has the option of picking up Miss Rogers's even more successful *Dark Fires*... Still on the path of the erotic epic, New World Pictures has acquired Jennifer Wilde's *Love's Tender Fury*. Looks like we may have the makings of a new genre here.

Cineaste magazine has published *Left Face*, a 16-page source-book of radical magazines, presses and collectives actively involved in the arts. Copies are $1.50 each, from *Cineaste*, 333 Sixth Avenue, NYC 10014 (212-989-3330).

Blowing our own horn department:

We've just co-published, with Peter Martin Associates, the 5th book in the *Take One* / PMA Film Book series. It's the *Canadian Film Reader,* an anthology edited by Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson, which collects 44 of the most important articles, excerpts and original essays on Canadian films. The book is arranged in five roughly chronological sections: prewar filmmaking, the National Film Board, feature filmmaking, experimental films and future projections. We think it's terrific and would like to congratulate Seth and Joyce.

The anthology is 405 pages long, includes an index, and costs only $6.95 ($15 hard-cover). It is available from better bookstores everywhere, or by mail from Cinebooks in Canada and New York Zoetrope, Box T, 31 East 12th Street, New York 10003 in the States. Buy it.

REVIEWS

This Is Where We Came In: The Career and Character of Canadian Film by Martin Knelman. McClelland & Stewart. 176 pages. $6.95 paper.

The most noteworthy aspect of Martin Knelman's *This Is Where We Came In* is how unnoteworthy it is. Knelman's past film reviews for the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* were striking in their style, thoughtfulness, and intelligence, as are his current theatre columns for *Saturday Night* and his movie columns for *Toronto Life*. In the context of a daily newspaper—which was Knelman's context approximately from 1967 to 1976 inclusive—he was the closest we could hope to get to an intellectual reporting regularly on films. Considering the talent involved then, the question that nags is why the manifest inadequacy of *This Is Where We Came In*?

One reason is that the entire game-plan changes in the switch from one medium (newspapers) to another (books). If we accept Walter Kerr's definition (via Andrew Sarris) of the basic difference between reviewing and criticism as the difference between assuming that the reader has not seen the work in question and assuming that he has, the newspaper reviewer must willy nilly don the mantle of critic when he undertakes a book. The writer should assume as a matter of course that the buyer of the book is familiar with the films he talks about; otherwise he probably would not have bothered to purchase it in the first place. Hence, a book has little need for the extended plot summaries that necessarily form the greater part of most newspaper reviews. The bulk of *This Is Where We Came In* consists of such extended plot summaries. Newsprint doesn't yellow any less slowly for being bound and placed between the covers of a book.

The book wisely uses the National Film Board as a starting point, discussing the Board and John Grierson, and then tracing their heritage to Canadian filmmakers. Grierson is unquestionably the star of the

opening section, and Knelman treats him in a duly respectful manner. In fact, Knelman's manner is so respectful that it keeps slipping into the reverential. Be that as it may, his descriptions of Grierson tend to work at curious cross-purposes: the manner goes one way, the matter the other.

Knelman presents anecdote after anecdote about Grierson, all of which are supposed to illustrate the estimable force of the man's personality. Instead, anecdote after anecdote reveals him to be grumpy, supercilious, and intolerant, among other things. Grierson was no doubt an astringent as well as a compelling man, but it seems highly unlikely that Knelman intended quite the portrait he actually drew.

After the Grierson chapter, the book picks up pace as it proceeds to describe the career and films of NFB-related filmmakers such as Claude Jutra ("Canada's greatest moviemaker"), Gilles Carle ("never quite lives up to his own promise"), and Denys Arcand ("a genuine original"), as they break away from the restrictions of the Board to confront in their films the cultural and political upheavals of Quebec. These chapters show Knelman at his best. His descriptions of his subject are readable, relaxed, informative, and entertaining. In describing Jutra's personality, Knelman displays the knack for evocative insight that makes him exceptional among reviewers. For example, Jutra, he writes, is a "man who seems highly conscious of nuances and gestures, and his own nuances and gestures give the impression that he shares private jokes with every pussycat he happens to encounter and has a complicated relationship with every chair he tries to tuck himself into." Cute but effective.

But most books worth their cover price have a thesis they wish to demonstrate, an idea they wish to expound, a vision they wish to show the world, an axe they wish to grind. It is the lack of such an informing point of view that is Knelman's book's most crippling deficiency. Knelman tries his damndest, by giving his book its NFB-vs.-CFDC framework, but the framework turns out to be scaffolding, not supporting structure. A point of view, it seems, can't be forced on a pastiche of mouldy old newspaper clippings, no matter how much revisonary writing has been done on them. Without a point of view, *This Is Where We Came In* wants genuine direction.

One feels under some pressure during these chauvinistic times to welcome and recommend, on principle, virtually any book that deals with Canadian films. In this instance, however, I think I can manage to withstand the pressure and waive the principle. For years a newspaper reviewer of movies, Knelman here offers us what amounts to a newspaper review of Canadian movie history. I fail to see the need for such a book.

Gary McCallum

Gary McCallum is a Toronto writer and frequent Take One *contributor.*

Movies and Methods edited by Bill Nichols. University of California Press. 640pp. $7.95 (paper).

The Essential Cinema: Essays on the Films in the Collection of Anthology Film Archives edited by P. Adams Sitney. Anthology Film Archives and New York University Press. 380pp. $20.00 and $8.95.

A History of the American Avant Garde Cinema. The American Federation of Arts. $6.50 (paper).

Film and / as Literature edited by John Harrington. Prentice-Hall. $8.95 (paper). (In Canada: $10.45).

Awake in the Dark: An Anthology of American Film Criticism, 1915 to the Present edited by David Denby. Vintage Books-Random House. $4.95. (In Canada: $5.95).

We tend casually to despise film anthologies as "non-books." The modesty of the tasks of selection, collation and prefatory writing look very small beside the presumed grandeur of book authorship. The pieces assembled are often of uneven quality. Previous familiarity with them breeds contempt, seldom assuaged by the guilty defensiveness habitually exhibited by so many anthologizers; those who haven't made real contributions to the volumes they edit, or those who haven't the faintest idea of what they are doing, aside from the commercial creation of a tidy little "package" for the classroom market.

Nevertheless, the best film anthologies have time and time again proved their worth over "real" books on film. This is to be expected since virtually all important film writing takes the form of essays published in periodicals and is only later preserved, if at all, in some kind of anthology. Wrongly discounted as a minor genre, the film (-critical-theoretical-methodological-historical) essay allows a writer to corner a topic neatly and to invite collaboration through further essays. And, while no one believes McCann's *Montage of Theories,* Talbot's *Film: An Anthology* or Jacobs' *Introduction to the Art of the Movies* were anything but editorial creations, these anthologies did originate an extremely valuable publishing format which has nurtured film writing that is neither newspaper-magazine movie review nor book-length monograph. We might recall that the work of Balazs, Arnheim, Eisenstein, Bazin, Burch, Metz, *et al* comes to us in anthologies, and that these writers did and do their best writing in essay form.

Bill Nichols' very large *Movies and Methods,* intended as a much-needed corrective survey of writing ignored by Mast and Cohen's "greatest hits" collection, *Film Theory and Criticism,* attempts to gather the most important work of the late 60s and early 70s. Rejecting the neat anthologist's categories, which work on the "Film and..." and "Film as..." models, Nichols sets up methodological slots like Political, Feminist, Semiology, Structuralism. These categories reflect a major shift in film writing, from established questions to new modes of question-making. Together with the relativizing tone of Nichols' copious prefatory remarks, these categories serve to distance the reader from the texts and banish the temptation to read *Movies and Methods* as a collection definitive of anything, except perhaps a brief period of intense but provisional thinking.

What is fascinating about Nichols' book is, first, that so few films are discussed, indicative of a trend (since reversed) away from any kind of movie "reviewing." Like most serious shifts in film criticism, the early 70s saw the initial narrowing of the canon of films to be discussed. (The exception here, John Hess's "political" review of *The Godfather, Part II,* is a tantalizing *tour de force* that suggests we should have an anthology of new reviews of this calibre as an alternative to the collections of Kael, Kaufmann, Simon and Sarris which, unfortunately, now dominate this crucial book area with their dull publicists' debates.) Secondly, the essays appear interdependent. In fact, understanding many of the assembled pieces depends on texts not included by Nichols but which he generously outlines to maintain continuity within the sections. Rarely has an anthology been so helpful to a reader wishing to build a bibliography.

Still, we are always aware that this imposing volume is but a partial report from the Academy. This can be rather daunting to the non-academic who has yet to make acquaintance with the advanced film-writing done since 1970. I would wager, by the way, that these non-academics include most tenured university film teachers.

Unfortunately, many of the pieces are already badly dated. The selections on "genre" and feminist criticism, for example, date from the moment things were just getting started. The issues raised by Tudow, Lovell, and Corliss, revolving around the [im]possibility of film genres without auteurs to enact their conventions, shortly dissolved into historical research suggesting that, underneath, the conceptual wrangling was really a search for an historiographical axis. The feminist pieces show how feminist criticism has rapidly developed from a moral position into a rich historical inquiry (see Kay & Peary's recent *Women and Cinema.*)

Although the impact of cine-structuralism and semiology is palpable in all the essays in *Movies and Methods*, this section's essays are the most valuable because Nichols' editorial strategy is designed to lend support to the eccentric position he himself holds. His "Style, Grammar and the Movies," which closes the volume, shows his preference for the Italians Pasolini and Eco over the French-*Screen* group gathered around Christian Metz. The reduplication here of Metz's startling, warmly appreci-

ative review of Jean Mitry's *L'Esthétique et Psychologie du Cinéma,* Vol II is central to Nichols' effective editorial divestment of Metz's authority. The review locates Metz clearly in the widely-abused idealist tradition, linking him back to Bazin. It openly acknowledges that Mitry is a major influence on Metz's thinking. Although Nichols explains, with carefully measured out approval, that Metz has since purged himself of idealist residue, other inclusions —Peter Wollen's sharp critique of the Metz-*Screen* group, Wollen's own Pierceanauteurist semiotic, Pasolini's *realist*-semiotic film poetics and Eco's wonderfully-crazed, anti-linguistic semiology—all cause Metz's second entry, "On the Notion of Cinematographic Language," to seem feeble and narrow indeed, and, by extension, causes Metz's stature as a towering figure of 70s film theory to appear a wild overestimation.

For such lessons alone, Nichols' *Movies and Methods* is a superb compendium of texts well worth the asking price—and the time.

P. Adams Sitney's *The Essential Cinema* is a very different anthology. The essays concern the film collection of New York's Film Anthology Archives and are, in reality, studies conducted at Anthology as part of its archival activities. A list of the films in Anthology's collection and huge bibliography of its library items fill out the volume's essays on Griffith's *Intolerence,* Soviet cinema, Bunuel, Vigo, Bresson and the American avant garde cinema (Anthology's major concern). With the exceptions of Standish Lawder's detailed historical essay, "Eisenstein and Constructivism," and Annette Michelson's influential "From Magician to Epistemologist (Vertov's *Man With the Movie Camera*)," the essays consist of systematic descriptions of specific films with careful attention to visual style. Sitney's own "The Rhetoric of Robert Bresson" and Ken Kelman's "The Films of Jean Vigo: A Life" (much better than most Kelman) are nothing less than exemplary.

A History of the American Avant Garde Cinema, like the best of *The Essential Cinema,* comes close to the style of art criticism, specifically to the catalogue-style essay cultivated by curators of art galleries and museums. Introduced by John Handart's 40-page "The Medium Viewed: The American Avant Garde Cinema," which has the kind of historiographical sweep one might expect from a Clement Greenberg, there are seven essays each covering a significant period of the American avant garde, from Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) to Hollis Frampton's *Nostalgia* (1971). A very large bibliography of the filmmakers' writings is included as well as a complete filmography for each of them.

The writers are, for the most part, Ph.D. students and graduates of New York University's Cinema Studies Department, whose essays are influenced by P. Adams Sitney and Annette Michelson. It follows that the canon of films discussed is quite small.

The essays in *A History...* follow the kind of avant garde anthology / museum catalogue format pioneered by Michelson with her *New Forms in Film*. The substance of the essays consists of exact, systematic descriptions of the films punctuated by a generous portion of the filmmakers' own remarks.

One may wonder—as did a very hostile Amos Vogel in *Film Comment*—whether or not the creation of a highly-structured curatorship of American avant garde films and control of the attendant critical discussion by a small circle of academics is a good idea. After reading *A History...* I myself think it is. They have asked the right questions and, with great modesty (not one of Michelson's lessons, to be sure), have provided highly suggestive readings of a body of difficult films. Problems may lie ahead concerning the expansion of the "canon," but the question of whether or not such a curatorship of the American avant garde film is a good idea is moot. No one else wants the job!

A History... is really a performance, that of legitimizing the American avant garde to the only institutions that will provide support, and show the films—*not* colleges and universities whose faculties care about the avant garde film even less than do tired businessmen—but art museums and galleries.

Both John Harrington's *Film and / as Literature* and David Denby's *Awake in the Dark* indicate the pitfalls that await unaware anthologizers. The mindless recycling of texts available elsewhere leads in both these volumes to an actual distortion of the assembled essays and to the making of truly bogus "non-books."

Harrington claims that his collection explores "the interactions between literary form and content and the specific media potentialities of film and print." But what he offers is a predictable stew except for one jewel, Virginia Woolf's "The Movies and Reality," which has nothing to do with film and / as literature. In fact many of the essays are almost wholly irrelevant: the Durgnat, Robinson, Sarris, Balazs, McLuhan and Arnheim essays are only very slightly concerned with the relation of film and literature, although they all have written interestingly on the topic elsewhere. Balazs, who was a scriptwriter (and a very bad one), seems to be arguing against the very interfacing Harrington would like to explore. The selections from Bluestone's *Novels Into Film* also propose a conceptual separatism between the media, while several scriptwriters' anecdotal pieces (including one by Dudley Nichols) suggest that they have accomplished such a separation.

With a myopia that is astonishing, Harrington has ignored the very excellent work that has been done in his area for over a decade. He fails even to mention John Fell's fascinating foray into 19th-Century sources, *Film and the Narrative Tradition,* and seems blissfully unaware of the whole East European literary tradition of formalism. But the most ironic thing about *Film and / as Literature* is that Harrington's selections, arrangements, glib, empty remarks and casual scattering of quotes between chapters convey the distinct impression that film and literature have nothing whatsoever to do with one another and that maybe he should not have brought up the whole subject in the first place.

David Denby's *Awake in the Dark* is subtitled An Anthology of American Film Criticism, 1915 to the Present. Denby seeks in his introduction to define the American grain, the genius of a national imagination, the humanist wonders of American pragmatist *belles lettres* and several other matters, not the least of which is the disaster of "academic" film criticism. For Denby, American film criticism is in itself fine literature because it is informed by an anti-systematic aesthetic, and is articulated by a prose style in which "the personality of the critic recedes." After all this, the reader may be surprised to find that Hugo Munsterberg, a pragmatist grandfather, is not the first entry. Vachel Lindsay is. As a matter of fact, Munsterberg doesn't appear at all. (Too "scientific"?)

Of the thirty-five other selections all but Paul Schrader's "Notes on" piece about film noir, Penelope Gilliatt's "Langdon," Molly Haskell's "Brando" and William Troy's review of *M* are readily available, most in single-author anthologies by Agee, Seldes, Farber, Ferguson, Kael, Kauffmann, McDonald, Sarris, Simon and Warshow.

Awake in the Dark's only purpose is perhaps as a sampler to the single-author anthologies where the accomplishments of American film criticism since 1915 are on display. Otherwise, nothing has been gained by assembling them in this way, and certainly no one but a fool would countenance a remark like "the personality of the critic recedes" when in the presence of Manny Farber, Otis Ferguson and John Simon.

Bart Testa

***Bart Testa** is a Toronto freelance writer.*

Heart of Glass, text by Alan Greenberg, scenario by Herbert Achternbusch and Werner Herzog. Skellig Edition, München. 1976. 200 pp. Illustrated. $4.95 (cloth).

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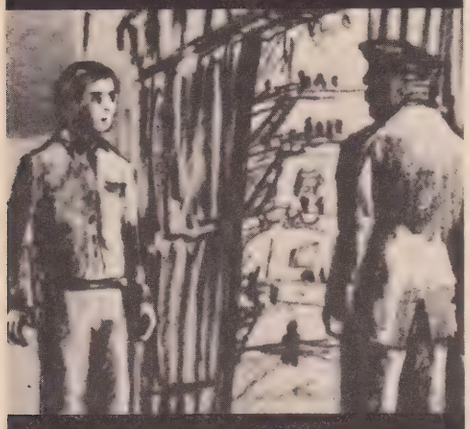

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session in the back of a Munich restaurant resulted in the casting of Herzog's film, *Heart of Glass,* shown at last year's Cannes and New York Film Festivals.

In attendance was an American journalist who had come to Germany to ask Herzog the standard questions about his previous films and techniques. But instead the writer found himself fascinated, hypnotized by Herzog's intensity and aura. The journalist abandoned his original intentions, was invited to join the project and took on another role—that of The Witness, as he calls himself in the book *Heart of Glass*.

Alan Greenberg has not written a conventional "on location" account of the filming, but more a free-flowing diary. As a friend, he is privy to Herzog's thoughts and actions. And at the same time, Greenberg witnesses his own reactions, becoming both the participant and the observer of his own experiences.

These recollections are interwoven with scenes of the *Heart of Glass* scenario, written by Herzog and German writer / director Herbert Achternbusch. The allegorical story revolves around a mad glass factory owner's attempt to find the secret of producing Ruby glass. The use of hypnosis is for stylization, according to Herzog, "to convey an atmosphere of hallucination, of prophecy, of the Visionary and of the collective madness which coalesces towards the end."

The structuring of Greenberg's text succeeds in giving the book a similar rhythm. Although parts of the book's scenario were never shot or were left out during editing, the text was left unchanged "to better display the genesis of the film," Herzog explains in the introduction.

This is a work that is gossipy in a positive sense: the details don't intrude but illuminate the film and the personalities—and there are some memorable ones. On the Herzog set, for example, people always work in pairs—two costume girls, two set designers, two cameramen, but only one director. Greenberg converses with (but doesn't "interview") the director's mother ("As a boy, he had some strange habits. He used to sit alone in his room for hours, always with the door closed. At times I would look in and I'd find him staring at a single object all day long"); his wife and members of his production crew.

And there are the conversations with Herzog himself. About film in general: "Film is not the art of scholars but of illiterates... Movies come from the country fair and circus, not from art...". About *Heart of Glass* in particular: "It seems to involve for me the meaning of a fragile state—an inner state—of persons."

Greenberg's *Heart of Glass* is not a biography in the conventional sense. At the beginning of the chronicle, the author tells Herzog that he hates his role as a journalist. But perhaps his definition is too narrow. Greenberg has written the best of personal journalism, a highly stylized work that shows a poetic eye for detail.

Jill Wolfson

***Jill Wolfson** is a newspaper film critic and feature writer.*

BOOKS IN BRIEF

A panoramic survey of expert opinions and views on film from 1894 to the present has been assembled by cinema scholar Jay Leyda in **Voices of Film Experience.** Over 600 personalities — directors, writers, actors, producers, composers among them — are quoted in this hefty volume, a magnum opus of cinematic wisdom. (Macmillan $19.95)

A complete record of movies and television shows pertaining to Jews and Judaism made or released in the US through 1950, **Jewish Films in the United States** is a unique source of information indispensable to scholars and researchers. Expertly compiled by Stuart Fox, this substantial volume's more than 4000 entries include basic production and distribution data, as well as explicit synopses. (G.H. Hall $40.00).

Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, that masterful 24 vol. literary exploration of time and memory, has been condensed by playwright Harold Pinter in a script, **The Proust Screenplay: A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu.** In this unproduced script, Pinter remarkably distills the essence of the great work. (Grove $2.95) (In Canada: Random House $3.50 & $11.50)

A biographical dictionary of leading protagonists in detective fiction, **Detectionary** will be of much assistance to researchers and buffs bent on trailing their favorite movie and book characters. Its knowledgeable editors are Otto Penzler, Chris Steinbrunner and Marvin Lachman.

In **Ken Russell: The Adaptor as Creater,** Joseph A. Gomez investigates the distinctive methods used by Russell to transpose for the screen classical works or his own scripts. In the course of his close analysis of the British director's films, Gomez finds that the excesses and frenzy, so frequently found objectionable by critics, derive, more often than not, from the material itself and the opportunities it offers Russell to display his eye- and mind-assaulting techniques. (Pergamon $15.95) (In Canada $17.50)

Russell's latest film, *Valentino,* is an excellent example of the director's lushness and blatant sexuality as Alexander Bland describes its eventful production in his

BOOKS

richly illustrated **The Nureyev Valentino** (Dell $6.95) (In Canada: Collier Macmillan $6.95 & $15.95)

In **King Lear: The Space of Tragedy,** Soviet director Grigori Kozintsev publishes his diary of the filming of Shakespeare's play, an illuminating document on the thought processes of an eminent director, his recollections of early days of Soviet cinema, and the actual problems of directing. (U. of California Press $14.95)

The posthumous autobiography of Rosalind Russell, written with Chris Chase, **Life Is a Banquet,** mirrors the assertive style of the actress and her optimistic outlook, and leaves it to her husband, producer Freddie Brisson, to tell of the cruel afflictions that fatally impaired her health. (Random House $10.00) (In Canada: $11.50)

The legendary Fairbanks-Pickford couple which dominated the early Hollywood is given a clinically objective treatment by Gary Carey in **Doug and Mary.** His biography is set against the background of shifting social attitudes of their day and the interaction between their movies and the mores of the American public. (Dutton $8.95) (In Canada: Clarke Irwin $10.75)

Peter Ustinov's delightfully literate autobiography, **Dear Me,** is a gem of wisdom, wit and wordliness as it unfolds the often mind-boggling saga of the actor-director-writer's career. (Little Brown $9.95) (In Canada: $11.50)

Among the distinguished portraits of celebrities appearing in Alistair Cooke's **Six Men,** Charles Chaplin and Humphrey Bogart are memorably revealed in moments of sincere and sensitive behavior. (Knopf $8.95) (In Canada: Random House $9.95)

George L. George

LIVRES

The Ça / Cinema collection (published by Editions Albatros), dedicated to studies of semiology and the film avant-garde, issues three exceptionally interesting books. **Octobre: Ecriture et idéologie,** the first in a 4-vol. series by Marie-Claude Ropars and Pierre Sorlin, offers a cinematic analysis of two sequences in Eisenstein's classic, exploring in depth the interaction between their filmic language and doctrinal contents (FF30.00). In the same collection, **Lectures du film** by a five-scholar collective investigates diverse aspects of cinema (technical, social, psychological) in a successful attempt to popularize current theoretical views and open new vistas for research (FF35.00). The third volume, **Marguerite Duras,** by the filmmaker herself and five colleagues, is an extended examination of Duras' film, *India Song,* and, through it, of her personality and creative methods (FF30.00).

A detailed survey of films shot in North America between 1911 and 1962 (date of Algeria's independence), Pierre Boulanger's **Le cinéma colonial** notes the evolution of themes from the racist and paternalistic approach of early movies made by imported directors to later films that attempted to interpret authentic national feelings (Seghers FF36.00).

In **Colette au cinéma,** Alain and Odette Virmaux have assembled film reviews and chronicles written by the celebrated novelist, as well as the dialogue she wrote for *Lac aux Dames* and her French subtitles for *Mädchen in Uniform.* The book reveals Colette's love and understanding of the movies, her delicate perception of visual nuances and her impatience with underestimation of the writer's contribution (Flammarion FF48.00).

The problems of film production, distribution and exhibition peculiar to France are lucidly tackled in Henri Lassa's essay, **De l'autre côté de l'écran.** Government subsidies and taxing powers bear heavily on film's dual aspect — artistic — artistic and economic — and threaten its freedom of expression. Lassa seeks solutions that will preserve this freedom within the constraints of the capitalist system (Denoël FF32.00).

The late film critic André Bazin, in **Cinéma de la cruauté,** discusses the work of directors Bunuel, Hitchcock, Sturges, Dreyer, Stroheim and Kurosawa. His perceptive pieces show that the common bond between these creative artists is a highly individual style and an aesthetically subversive frame of mind (Flammarion FF38.00).

Michèle Morgan reminisces wistfully in **Avec ces yeux-là** about a career that took her from Paris studios to Hollywood and back, a success story that seems to have happened serendipitously (Laffont (FF45.00).

Jean Marais, who starred in many Jean Cocteau films, left a candid autobiography, **Histoire de ma vie,** that illuminates his professional career and French society before, during and after the Nazi occupation (Albin Michel FF39.00).

Interaction between film and history is the theme of Marc Ferro's **Cinéma et histoire,** a study of the movies (*The Third Man, Grande Illusion, Jew Süss* and *Potemkin* among others) that wielded a profound influence on the societies responsible for their content (Denoël FF13.50).

George L. George

***George L. George**, an Academy Award winner, has for many years combined film directing and film book reviewing in France, Canada and the US.*

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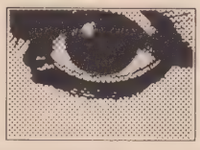

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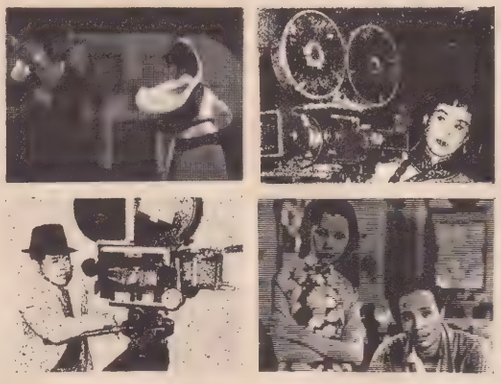

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THE REGULARS

Continued from page 44

put together from footage shot by Eisenstein for *Que Viva Mexico*, there is a magnificent shot of a pelican preening itself in the sun—an extreme close-up—that I would not swap for all the new films around, and I mean *all*. And who will raise his voice in memory of an independently-made American film called *Where the Lilies Bloom* if not I? It came out not so very long ago and went by so quietly that it is now as if it had never existed. It was about children, who have lost their parents, trying to make a life for themselves—a film of the utmost purity and, in a world like this, it was like a benediction.

In the transition period from silent films to sound, one critic's name stood out for both his intensely personal evaluations and the patrician style with which he couched his appraisals, the measures he took of directors and their work—Harry Alan Potamkin. That these measures were to a large degree determined by the sociological and political slant with which he viewed them had long since been taken for granted by those who avidly read him (which included me). He wore Marxist specs at a time when for him the explosion of the new Soviet cinema sent almost everything else flying in all directions. And, in fact, almost everything else *did* pale beside bombshells like *Potemkin, Mother, October, The End of St Petersberg, Arsenal* and the rest. There was no one else then who wrote with such passion for what he liked and disliked and why, nor is there anyone today to match his verve, fulminating through every bit of frippery, flailing on all sides (it is surprising today to note those who were lashed by his fury, often for what we regard today as their most prestigious works)—indeed, I would give anything to see what Potamkin would say of what passes for the films of today. In lieu of that we have a compilation of his writings of past films, *The Compound Cinema*, edited by Lewis Jacobs. The standards held in these opinions, whatever else they were (we were, alas, to see how the first rapture of the Soviet cinema all too soon eroded along with the erosion of once high values held by the Soviet state) represent the highest held by anyone—then or now. You will disagree with many of his opinions, I am sure, with his detonations which demolish this one and that one among his "field generals of the film" (the best essay in the book), but you will not deny him the role that John Grierson played when he, too, took the measure of a director who also fulminated against his time (Stroheim) versus the "flat footed orthodoxy" of other directors who played it safe, with his parting gallantry—"What are a few deaths to the art of Benvenuto?"

***Herman Weinberg** has contributed articles to most of the world's leading film journals, served on the juries of various film festivals, and published several books on the cinema.*

RENTAL NEWS

For lovers of Claude Lelouch films, Pyramid Films (Box 1048, Santa Monica, CA 90406; 213-390-FILM) now has two of his shorts (*Rendezvous* and *Turquie*) available for rent (at $25 and $30 respectively) and sale ($175 and $250) in Super-8, 16mm or video cassette. Tell 'em we sent you.

Ivy Film has acquired Joan Micklin Silver's *Between the Lines* for non-theatrical distribution. Described by the *Times'* Vincent Canby as "an appealing comedy" about a small weekly newspaper, the film is immediately available from Ivy at 165 West 46th Street, New York, NY 10036 (212-765-3940).

Two new films are now available for rent or purchase from Japan Society Films (333 East 47th Street, New York, NY 10017; 212-832-1155): *Shinto: Nature, Gods, and Man in Japan* (48 min.) is about Japan's native religion, perhaps the least known and least understood of the world's great religions; *Full Moon Lunch* (57 mins.) is an intimate portrait ("intriguing," the *New York Times* called it) of the life of a Japanese family.

Tricontinental Film Center (333 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10014; 212-989-3330) plans a spring release for *The Last Supper,* the latest feature by Tomas Gutierrez Alea, who also directed the much-hailed *Memories of Underdevelopment.*

Three films by Jean Rouch (*Jaguar, The Lion Hunters* and *Les Maîtres fous*), as well as *Terre sans pain,* by Luis Bunuel, are among the dozens of short films available for rental or purchase from Documentary Educational Resources, 24 Dane Street, Somerville, MA 02143 (617-666-1750).

Roman Polanski's X-rated comedy, *What?*, originally produced (by Carlo Ponti) in 1973, is finally available. Contact Bread and Circus, 6355 North Broadway, Chicago, IL 60660.

Universal / 16 (445 Park Avenue, NY 10022) announces their second 3-D 16mm release, Jack Arnold's *It Came from Outer Space.* This film, along with their first 3-D release, *Creature from the Black Lagoon,* and many other new releases are described in the new 232-page Spring 1978 edition of their catalog, available free upon request.

CONFERENCES & COMPETITIONS

For more information about the **U.S. Conference for an Alternative Cinema**, bringing together people involved in the production, distribution and exhibition of social and political films, contact Cinéaste Magazine, 333 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10014.

Films in regular 8, Super-8 and 16mm, from anywhere in the world, are eligible for entry (there's a $4.50 entry fee) in this year's **Movies on a Shoestring** (deadline March 25). Write Movies on a Shoestring, P.O. Box 3360, Rochester, NY 14614.

Ed Emshwiller is among the judges at **The Atlanta Independent Film and Video Festival,** which will run May 12 through 20. There are $1500 in cash prizes for works in Super-8, 16mm or 3 / 4" video (deadline April 3; $5 entry fee). Entry forms from: IMAGE, Independent Media Artists of Georgia, 608 Forrest Ave., Atlanta, GA 30312 (404-577-6440).

The 11th annual **Humbolt Film Festival** will take place April 6 through 9—the deadline for entries is March 31. Only 16mm silent or optical-sound films are eligible, and there are two categories: one is for students, and the other for all other independent filmmakers. Further information: Film Festival Committee, Theatre Arts Department, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA 95521 (707-826-3566).

March 15 is the entry deadline for what promises to be the most comprehensive Super-8 film festival ever—**The Toronto Super-8 Film Festival**—complete with workshops, screenings, equipment displays, and coverage of other Super-8 festivals around the world (as well as what various TV-networks are doing in the medium). Lenny Lipton will be there, as will Polaroid and the National Film Board. Contact Sheila Hill, Box 7109, Station "A", Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X8.

The **Palo Alto Film Festival** is to take place April 19 through 23, and is open (deadline March 28) to films in regular 8mm, Super-8 and 16mm by Northern California filmmakers. There's a $3 entry fee and about $500 in potential prizes. Write the film festival c / o Palo Alto Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

Students in grades 1 through 12 can enter the **Michigan Student Film Festival** (April 28 and 29), which is open to all 8mm gauges, 16mm, and video, as well as slide shows. More from: Dick Rockwell, Dondero High School, 709 North Washington, Royal Oak, MI 48067.

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INFO

April 3 is the entry deadline for any-length 35mm, 16mm and Super-8 films entered in this year's **Athens International Film Festival** (held April 21 through 30). $3000-worth of awards are up for grabs in a variety of categories. More info: Athens International Film Festival, Box 388, Athens, OH 45701 (614-594-6888). (This year, Andrew Sarris will chair a special symposium on Contemporary Film Comedy during the first three days of the Festival.)

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PUNDITS' PAGE

A handy-dandy guide to some of this season's major films, in the form of critical nuggets gleaned from the writings of America's most influential movie critics

By Susan Schenker

THE GOODBYE GIRL

Directed by Herbert Ross. Screenplay by Neil Simon. With Marsha Mason, Richard Dreyfuss, Quinn Cummings.

"As directed by the ubiquitous Herbert Ross, *The Goodbye Girl* is a modest, bittersweet comedy that will delight Simon fans and leave his critics staunchly unconverted." *David Ansen, NEWSWEEK*

"The miseries of the Goodbye Girl seem hopelessly exaggerated, and her irritating self-pity and self-centeredness make it hard to understand just what the young actor sees in her. He himself, moreover, is excruciatingly cute—a veritable Holly Golightly of a lover." *Joy Gould Boyum, WALL STREET JOURNAL*

"You'll enjoy laughing along with *The Goodbye Girl*—it's almost as much fun as 'Laverne and Shirley.'" *Richard Corliss, NEW TIMES*

The film was directed by Herbert Ross who, as befits an ex-dancer, improves by leaps and bounds. The tempos are lively, the camera movement around the apartment fluent, and the performance winning. *John Simon, MACLEAN'S MAGAZINE.*

PADRE, PADRONE

Directed and written by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani from the autobiography by Gavino Ledda. With Omero Antonutti, Saverio Marconi, Fabrizio Forte.

"*Padre, Padrone* was my favorite film of 1977 because it most vividly evoked the frissons of discovering cinema afresh both as an art form and a humanistic experience." *Tom Allen, VILLAGE VOICE.*

"The directors are too coldly rigorous in their efforts to remain aloof from the emotional content of their story: they place so large an intellectual distance between us and the characters that the gap becomes unbridgeable." *Frank Rich, TIME MAGAZINE.*

THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE

Directed by Luis Bunuel. Screenplay by Bunuel with Jean-Claude Carrière, from the novel La Femme et Le Pantin *by Pierre Louys. With Fernando Rey, Carole Bouquet, Angela Molina, Julien Bertheau.*

"The wholeness of spirit that informs *That Obscure Object of Desire* outshines the story; the artist delights us even as the film disappoints us." *Pauline Kael, THE NEW YORKER*

"Bunuel tells this sagacious and salacious tale with that uncanny style of his—swift, clear, graceful but eerie, like a tarantula dancing the minuet." *Jack Kroll, NEWSWEEK*

"*That Obscure Object of Desire* has graced quite a few Ten-Best lists, so I'm reluctant to see in Luis Bunuel's latest film no more than an amiable, over-extended shaggy-Andalusian dog story." *Richard Corliss, NEW TIMES*

HIGH ANXIETY

Directed by Mel Brooks. Written by Brooks, Rudy DeLuca, Ron Clark, and Barry Levinson. With Brooks, Madeline Kahn, Harvey Korman, Cloris Leachman.

"Couldn't Brooks do something that would stand on its own feet—a modern satirical musical comedy? He might even manage to make it a light farce. If he needs a theme, there are dozens of possible variations on success and celebrity. How about a rich, unimagineably successful comic who's so afraid he'll lose the public if he tries something new that he loses it by doing the same thing over and over?" *Pauline Kael, THE NEW YORKER*

"...*High Anxiety* is 100 percent pure (i.e. impure) Brooks, meaning that it is wildly uneven, vulgar, intermittently hilarious, and at its very best when it is not being terribly funny at all." *Molly Haskell, NEW YORK MAGAZINE*

"Even the Hitchcock parodies grow awfully tiresome. There's no satiric point to any of the skits; they're completely harmless and bloodless." *Stephen Farber, NEW WEST MAGAZINE*

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

Directed by John Badham. Screenplay by Norman Wexler, based on a story by Nik Cohn. With John Travolta, Karen Lynn Gorney, Donna Pescow.

"Fortunately, the beat of the movie and the rhythm of Travolta's rough-diamond dynamism is likely to stay with you long after you've forgotten the contrivances of Hollywood retribution." *Richard Corliss, NEW TIMES*

"You feel great watching this picture, even if it doesn't hold in the mind afterward, the way it would if the story had been defined." *Pauline Kael, THE NEW YORKER*

"What is missing is the vital connection, implicit in the story, between life and the dance, between the hopelessly constricted lives of the protagonists and the Saturday-night ritual, which is more than an escape, more than salvation, which is life—a perfectly ordered life—itself." *Molly Haskell, NEW YORK MAGAZINE*

ANOTHER MAN, ANOTHER CHANCE

Written and directed by Claude Lelouch. With James Caan, Geneviève Bujold, Susan Tyrrell, Jennifer Warren.

"Pic could have used more robust scripting, more dimensional characters to add more to the theme of immigration, or to the western for that matter." *Mosk., VARIETY*

"Caan and Bujold, as representatives of their respective cultures, are enchanting together, and Lelouch has created an atmosphere in which their fragile, bilingual flirtations can thrive without being cloying." *Molly Haskell, NEW YORK MAGAZINE*

***Susan Schenker** is a New York writer and freelance story analyst for major motion picture companies.*

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